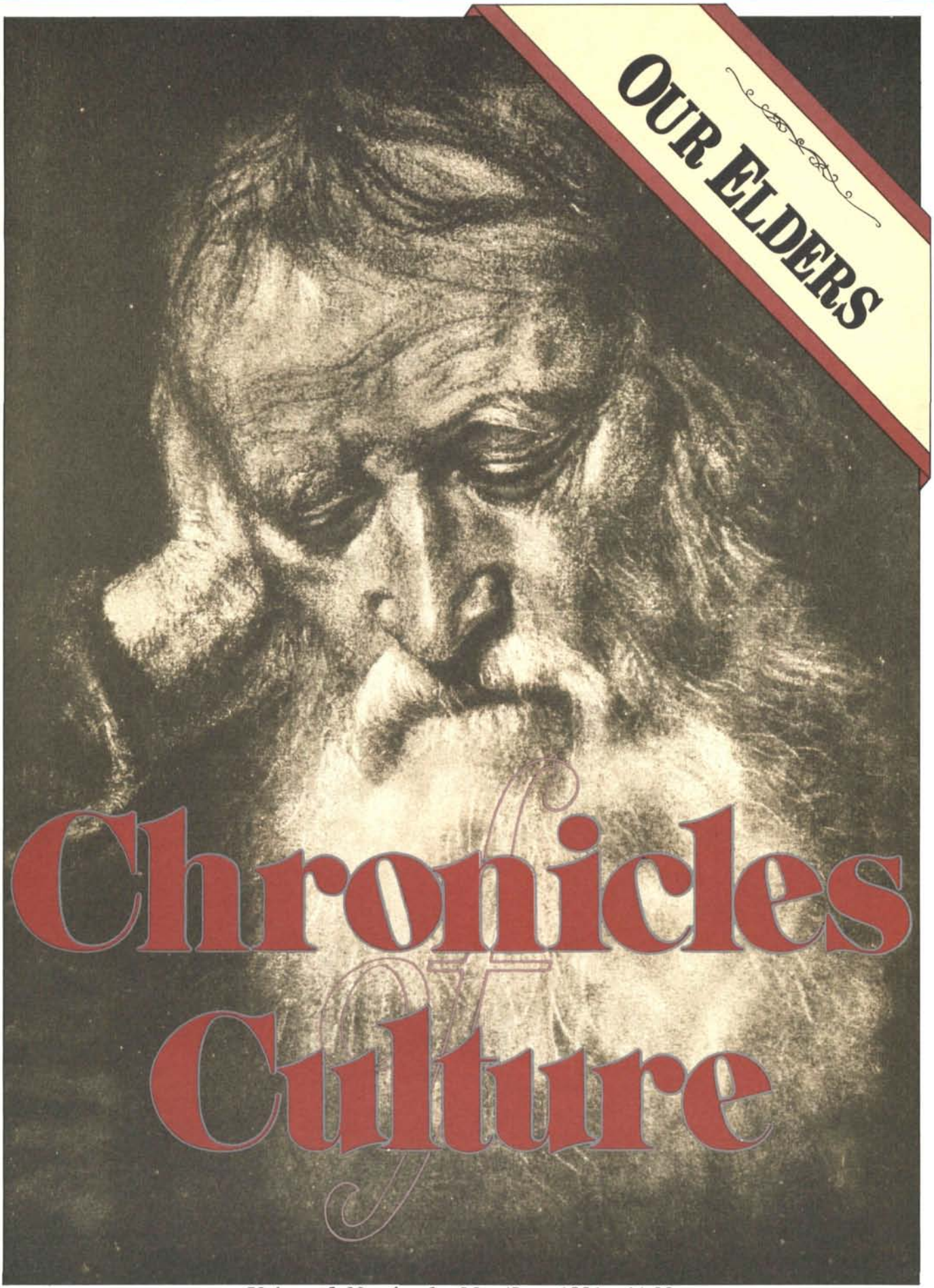

Chronicles of Culture

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Chronicles of Culture

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Our Elders

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COMMENT

On the third of January 1981, the great scholar Eric Voegelin passed his eighth decade. The event was discreetly celebrated by the "inside circle" and by a second *Festschrift* which collects more than twenty essays in his honor. Yet, despite the general acclaim of his *oeuvre,* Voegelin is an ambiguous philosopher, which is not rare among German scholars and thinkers: Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger have created controversies around their thought, and their disciples have even split into two camps, "left" and "right," i.e. nihilist vs. constructive, realist vs. existentialist.

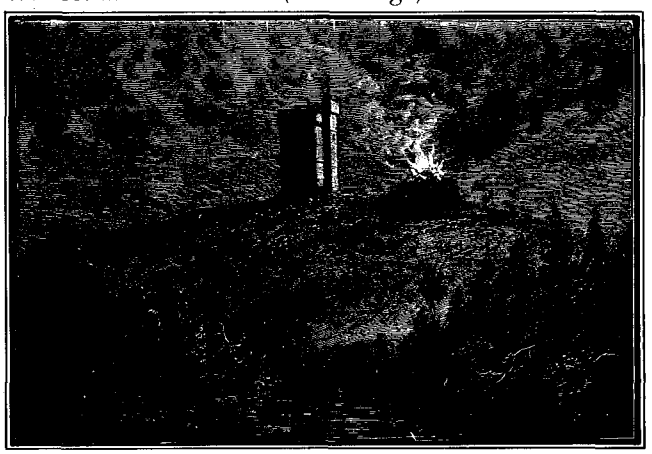
In several respects there are two Eric Voegelins. In Germany, except for the more fervent group of his followers, academic opinion is rather cool: is he a political scientist? a philosopher? a historian of ideas? The pigeonhole method of classifying him does not work. In contrast, he was warmly received in the United States when he returned for a second visit. Here, too, of course, the professors distrusted the "political scientist" who scrutinized history for traces of Gnosticism, who wrote profoundly of Plato, the Hebrew prophets and the wisdom of ancient China. Voegelin found an intellectual home among grateful American conservatives, although it is possible that their loyalty to him is based on misunderstanding.

America's ideologically bruised conservatives think of Voegelin as a scholar who rescued the genuine philosophical values from the devastations of "value-free" political thought and as a writer advocating and illustrating the religious world view. The first assumption is well-founded; the second is not. One of Voegelin's targets of attack is Auguste Comte and the positivist school which reduces all things to a narrowly conceived "science," leaving no room for the myriad of phenomena inside and outside of man. Modern ideologies were engendered partly by this reductionism, their other parent being the gnostic world view. Consequently, Voegelin's other target is Gnosticism's later representatives: Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and, in retrospect, Joachim of Flore, the father of history's division into the "ages" that Hegel, Marx and Comte inherited. The problem is not with the actual division, without which man would be unable to orient himself on the vast time-expanse of history, but with the assumption that in every classified age an ontological leap occurred. The end result of such a notion would be that mankind is bound to arrive at a divine state at the end of history. Instead of being the chronicle of men in a homogeneous time, history is interpreted as an immanent deity, maturing toward the eschatological moment. Secularized, this arrogant theory produces contemporary adulation of progress and authorizes dreadful abuses by those who regard themselves as the priesthood of the ultimate age—the totalitarians.

For all his thorough critique of positivists, progressivists and ideologues, Voegelin should not be classified as a Christian author. I once called him a "Greek thinker," more like Plato than Isaiah or St. Paul, about whom he also wrote memorable pages. What then is the philosophy of Eric Voegelin?

I see the essence of his thought—again the Platonic intuition—in the correspondence he establishes between the structure of being and the structure of the soul. In this sense, the history of mankind—through empires, systems and ecumenic periods—is a continuous effort by man to conform to the order of reality, that is, to situate himself in the mediational zone (the Greek *metexy*), the transcendent God's "magnetic field." History, Voegelin argues, is the story of approaching this order. For millennia man believed in the intramundane gods and searched for them in myths and other symbolizations. Then, simultaneously, two breakthroughs occurred, one in Israel and the other in Hellas. The one transcendent God was adumbrated by prophets in Israel and by philosophers in Hellas. The soul could now open to the order of being and itself become ordered.

At this point questions arise that, to my knowledge, Voegelin's friends and followers have not been asking. After three volumes of his great opus, *Order and History,* devoted to Hellas and Palestine, Voegelin was expected to deal with the more modern times, which would, of course, involve a thorough treatment of Christianity. Instead, his fourth volume was *The Ecumenic Age,* and it is questionable whether anything further will be published in this series. It seems that Voegelin finds it difficult to come to terms with Christian revelation and subsequent Christian civilization. Indeed, what *could* he propose after *Israel and Revelation* (Vol. I) and *Plato and Aristotle* (Vol. III)? He cannot afford to consider the Christian revelation as final, because that would mean that we know the "meaning of history," a proposition that Voegelin resolutely rejects. If, on the other hand, he adumbrates further revelations, he is forced into Heidegger's corner, where it is argued that the gods appear and disappear, each set with a revelation ("unveiling") of its own. But then



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the "order of being," on which Voegelin places the whole weight of his speculation, could be lost and found again, and therefore we do not continually approach it.

This is the Voegelinian dilemma, a source of ambiguity in his thinking that is visible in *The Ecumenic Age.* Voegelin speaks there of Paul's and the disciples' *experience* of Jesus, not of Jesus as a reality. Christianity becomes akin to the "philosophers' myth," carefully devised so as to be compatible with both the divine and the human. In other words, the last word belongs to Plato: Plato's experience and St. Paul's experience remain the ultimate guarantee of the truth of philosophy and of the truth of revealed religion.

Thus it is hardly appropriate to argue that Voegelin has rescued the Christian values or that he illustrates the religious world view. His merit is elsewhere, in the rehabilitation of political thought from the positivist and the Hegelian ideologues. Our age will be judged by future historians as the age of ideologies, of distorted views of reality. But it will also be noted that ideologies sometimes called forth a salutary reaction and obliged historians and philosophers to take inventory of our foundations: myth, wisdom, civilization, politics, providence. In these areas the Voegelinian synthesis advanced more deeply than the ideas of any of his colleagues. He became, not unlike his beloved Plato, a sage in the Atlantic *oikumene,* in Europe and America.

The Voegelin-Plato parallel has a further validity. Until his Sicilian sojourn the Athenian philosopher believed that political wisdom could be secured—if no longer at home, then abroad, but still on Greek territory—planted in the soul of a young tyrant. The "Seventh Letter" to his friends in Athens tells of a disappointing reality, but also, and how movingly, of the philosopher's youthful fire and continuing search.

In *The New Science of Politics* (1952) Voegelin distinguished an ideologically revolutionary Europe from the American tradition with its classical, Christian foundations. Discreet, almost aloof, he has not written a "Seventh Letter" about his disappointments, the ideologization of America. He retired to his office at Stanford and created around himself a one-man Academy, with disciples both near and far. Again like Plato and every genuine lover of wisdom, Voegelin's curiosity is never exhausted. In his seventies, he traveled to Yucatan, Stonehenge and Malta in search of the secrets of early men as they watched the heavens; he took up the study of alchemy, lectured on carbon-14 dating methods and on the "axial years" of Karl Jaspers.

A philosopher at eighty may be the best image of the eternally young man.

—Thomas Molnar

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LIBERAL CULTURE

Woes

Playboy Press has published a book entitled *The Playboy Interview,* recollecting the interviews with individuals whom *Playboy* admired during the last two decades. The volume may prove to be an important source for future historians—the ultimate documentation of the degeneracy of the Western mind, which was poisoned by the decayed liberalism of our times. We quote (from the *Chicago Tribune's* review of the book) what Yoko Ono had to say to *Playboy* about the 60's:

> It was like an orgy. Then, after that big come that we had together, men and women somehow lost track of each other and a lot of families and relationships split apart. I really think that what happened in the 70s, can be compared to what happened under Nazism with Jewish families.

And then Bertrand Russell, an eager conversationalist with his intellectual peers at *Playboy:*

> I think that if the West were to voluntarily divest itself of nuclear weapons as a token of its peaceful intentions—this would greatly impress the Russians. They would then feel they had nothing to fear and they could enormously reduce their own expenditure on armaments. They would spend their money on consumer goods instead.

Ms. Ono is one of this country's most celebrated and wealthy women. Professor Russell was one of this civilization's most admired brains. As the ancients knew, woe to the land which rewards vicious idiocy with riches and fame, and woe to a civilization which touts drooling dimwits as sages.

Long Live the Eternal Truth of the New York Times

A title and subtitle of an article in the *New York Times Magazine anno Domini* 1981 reads:

> **A Lament for Vietnam**
>
> A former South Vietnamese dissenter tells in a personal memoir of his disillusionment with the victorious Communists, his imprisonment at their hands, and the new tyranny that North Vietnam has brought to his country.

Yes, Virginia, this is the same newspaper (often called the most trusted journal in America) which eagerly printed any elucubration of any supporter of North Vietnam during the war years, the same paper whose reporters, columnists, editorialists and assorted contributors condemned the American effort to save Vietnam, calling it one of the most shameful episodes of our history. It's the same paper that actively helped to undermine and to destroy the Indochina policies of three U.S. Presidents, and ultimately convinced this nation that it had dirtied its hands with the stain of imperialism by trying to rescue South Vietnam from communism. Yes, Virginia, there is a free and responsible press here which knows how to maintain its dignified respectability by lobotomizing our collective memory. □

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Prefabricated Self-Irony & Pneumatic Praise

Woody Allen: *Side Effects;* Random House; New York.

Jerome Charyn: *Darlin' Bill: A Love Story of the Wild West;* Arbor House; New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

Woody Allen is a very engaging character. I suspect that upon meeting him for the first time, even the most ardent admirer wouldn't address him as Mr. Allen, but, rather, knowingly nudge him in the ribs with an elbow and say, "How's it going, Woody?" A broad wink would accompany the words. I can see it now: Woody responds with a wan smile and wonders if he has any broken ribs. If the greeter happens to be a female (and if so, you can bet that she's good-looking in a kooky sort of way), Woody contemplates her ribs. The scene fades as the campy couple wander off in search of bagels, peanut butter and Perrier. He trips on a shoelace dangling from his left sneaker.

A personality that comes to mind in contrast—a man who is also accomplished in many fields while still being essentially a comedian—is Steve Allen. There seem to be two Steve Allens: Mr. Allen and Steverino. The former is a singer(?)/songwriter ("This could be the start of something big . . ."), the writer/performer of public television's "Meeting of the Minds," and the author of some 20-odd books, ranging from collections of short stories to a recently published one about mainland China (where his wife, Jayne Meadows, was born). This can be stacked up against Woody the playwright/actor/director/screenplay writer, contributor to *The New Yorker, Kenyon Review* and *The New Republic* (where 14 of the 16 pieces in *Side Effects* originally appeared), musician and who knows what else.

Even though Mr. Steve Allen comes off like a pompous ass and/or idiot in some of his (what I suspect are) noncomedic works, such as *A Letter to a Conservative* (and I take that characterization back if they really are comic but he's just not telling us), I don't think one would nudge him in the ribs and say, "Aw, come on, Steve." With Woody, however, when he gets too serious (e.g. his films *Interiors* and *Stardust Memories),* it seems that he could be brought back down to earth with such a friendly poke. And so could Steverino, the Mr. Hyde of Mr. Allen, the comedian who tells adequate jokes, then guffaws so strenuously that the audience can't help but laugh at (but seemingly with) someone who finds his own utterances so screamingly funny. Of course, a mere poke couldn't get through to Steverino; a poleax would be more effective.

Steve Allen is one-half motley, one-half gray flannel. Woody Allen appears to have been cut from whole cloth: sackcloth, to be exact. However, sewn with invisible thread is a silk lining.

Woody Allen has nurtured and developed his character in many of his films. In *Take the Money and Run* he portrays a combination schlemiel/schlimazel, a bungling redhead with freckles that just can't seem to make it as a criminal—or anything else. When he gets to *Play It Again, Sam,* the quintessential Woody emerges in the character Allan Felix. Felix is a film buff who has and does all of the "right" things, who should, under normal circumstances, "make it." But he just falls short in his own eyes, and even the apparition of Humphrey Bogart in a *Casablanca* trenchcoat can't get the self-disparaging Hamlet to go the final millimeters. Success seems to be an illusion.

When Woody does make it, such as in *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan,* the viewer knows that something is wrong. Woody can't let them down. And, indeed, he shows that the Gods, Fate, or Whoever have it in for him and will come down on him with the force of a stage deus ex machina when the gears on the elevating mechanism suddenly fail and gravity takes over. Woody makes something of a modern-day Pilgrim's Progress as he plods through the streets, parties and bedrooms of New York City and ancillary chic spots, tempted from all sides by Sex, Drugs and other modern allurements. This modern pilgrim's attitude toward them is, "Hey, I'm a regular guy," so he gives in with a shrug. After all, it's not every day that a Diane Keaton makes eyes at someone like him. Many men—except those resembling Robert Redford or Warren Beatty (a qualification that turns the adjective to most)—can identify with Woody, just as they could sympathize with the skinny guy in the Charles Atlas ads. Woody is made an offer he could refuse, but it's so extraordinary (after all, just look at him, then look at her) that he can't bring himself to do it. It's only a matter of time until the cam-shaped wheel of fortune turns and starts on its long downward motion; the brief lobe of success moves out from under him and he's dumped back on the road, alone. Woody Allen has made rejection an art form.

Woody is himself a living manifestation of that art form. The quips that are reported to have come from the lips

Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of Manufacturing Engineering *in Detroit, and one of his pieces for that journal was recently translated into Chinese.*

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of the Woody Allen that you don't pay $3.75 to see or $8.95 to read sound just as brisk as the celluloid and printed ones. When the Academy Awards are presented, the nominees are typically there, breathlessly awaiting the announcement, or else they are on-location in some godforsaken spot filming still another Hollywood masterpiece. Regrets, naturally, are extended to the Academy. (This scenario depicts only the overtly nonpolitical types, the ones who don't send an Indian maiden or the like up on stage to make a speech.) But when *Annie Hall* cleaned up Oscars the way a vacuum cleaner in a department-store demonstration picks up lint, Woody wasn't to be found within 2000 miles of the ceremony, and he wasn't working on a film. Instead, there he was, playing a clarinet in a New York bar. No arrogance was implied by his lack of attendance. There was just the typical, Woodyesque shrug: Mr. Average doesn't win little gold statues.

Failure is his *raison d'être.* Few succeed as well as Woody fails. But we must believe the first statement and ignore the second for Woody to pull off what he does so well. Woody the character is Woody the man. Life isn't imitating art or vice versa. Woody just *is*—although he would probably take issue with the verb tense.

Woody's *Side Effects* is no exception to this approach. That is, I find it impossible to read any of the pieces in the book without thinking about Woody either acting out the parts or reciting the pieces as a monologue. The artist isn't remote, indifferent, far above, paring his fingernails. No, he's right there, biting them to the quick, hoping the stories will work. And they usually do, thanks, in part, to the portrait of the artist as a horn-rimmed kibitzer that we can't help but feel sorry for and identify with. There's no question about it, Woody Allen is a very talented man. To keep that from coming across he bathes himself in self-irony as liberally as members of the 18th-century French court applied eau de cologne to their seldom-washed bodies—there's something under all of the pleasantness that isn't quite as sweet and freshly fragrant. The Woody who is the darling of the beau monde, the Woody of fiction and film who is fated to fail, is not the Woody of real life, not the one who writes the words and directs the cameras, although they appear to be one and the same. If the latter falls, it's really only a stumble, and one that's probably planned, at that.

Joseph Addison once wrote an opera called *Rosamond.* It is largely forgotten—mercifully so. A song in the opera sung by a king best characterizes Woody's approach to life as portrayed in *Side Effects,* his films and perhaps even his clarinet playing:

> Oh, the pleasing, pleasing anguish,
> When we love, and when we languish!
> Wishes rising!
> Thoughts surprising!
> Pleasure courting!
> Charms transporting!
> Fancy viewing
> Joys ensuing!
> Oh, the pleasing, pleasing anguish!

The scene fades as a slight man in horn-rimmed glasses skips all the way to the bank.

* * *

One of the best ways to dissemble a qualitative assessment of someone or something is to let loose with effusive praise. Conviction + volume = spurious authority. The louder the noise, the less likely is someone to call the reason for the praise to the bar, and the more likely that people will join the chorus. It's like yawning in a crowd: soon everyone is doing it. Culturally and socially, the chain-reaction phenomena quickly reaches critical mass, particularly when the object of the praise is a darling of those who can generate the most noise. Critical mass leads to overkill. An example: designer jeans.

Consider the Beatles. The group's success grew exponentially. Some of it was deserved. Some of it. Most critics were soon lost below the clamor created by the fans of the Fab Four and particularly by those whose jobs were to make sure that the shrieks, wails, faintings, sobbing, cheers, applause, ticket sales, record sales and all the rest that we know are to accompany music continued. Anyone who had anything nasty to say about the group, its music or the individuals who were the Beatles was dismissed by the bellowing organs (audio and visual) as suffering from some psychological or physiological aberration. Before the group split up (an event caused because the group that sang "All You Need Is Love" decided that another song, not often mentioned in *Rolling Stone,* "Money," a paean to the once-filthy lucre, proved more accurate in terms of real life), I suspected that it could have released an album of gutteral sounds that would have been hailed as a commercial and critical success. This thought was, in a sense, realized in the late John Lennon's *Double Fantasy* album. (Yes, it is John Lennon *and* Yoko Ono, but her addition is a function of marriage: how many Ono solo albums would sell?) Only the most extreme or deaf Beatle fan can find anything to admire on the album, yet it is selling like McDonald hamburgers. Although Lennon's death has something to do with sales (i.e. people think that they are getting a collector's item or a saint's relic), it must not be overlooked that the album was widely and loudly hailed when it appeared. Is it possible that literally millions of people actually enjoy the music? No. But Lennon is a genius—now everyone says so—ergo, the album must be owned, never mind the music.

Money is not the only thing that's inflated. Other facets of culture are flawed as well. Consider film: how many new Gables and Bogarts have you heard hailed during the past year? How many old films do you prefer watching to the new? Ingénues rival the Divine Sarah in a twinkling. With the release of each

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new suspense thriller, Hitchcock rotates a few degrees in his grave as his name is cited; by now, he's completed a circuit. Tyro director Michael Cimino is hailed for his work on *The Deer Hunter,* so he's given Carte Blanche, American Express and Diners' Club on *Heaven's Gate,* amasses a tremendous debt, and creates a film that is pulled from distribution the day after its premiere.

Critical acuity is atrophied. Its replacement, pseudocriticism, is an appeal to authority that's quickly reformed into an *ad populum* dictate. *People, Rolling Stone, Time,* etc. say something is good; they should know, so before you can say Farrah Fawcett, the entire world seems to be in agreement. Fiction becomes fact.

In the area of literature, a prime example of an object of pneumatic praise is Jerome Charyn. Looking at the blurbs on the dust jacket of *Darlin' Bill,* one swoons from all the printed hot air. Consider this: "Charyn is a comic genius. . . . This is Kafka turned American picaro . . ."—*Library Journal.* Kafka! Charyn is no more Kafka than Judith Krantz is Jane Austin. The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* feels that Charyn will be read by our "children and grandchildren along with the Bellows and the Updikes and the Faulkners and the Hemingways." Note how this august journal implies a) that Bellow, Updike, Faulkner and Hemingway have been cloned and b) that future pathetic but darling hacks can join the crowd. An easy way to see the Brobdignagian nature of this empty praise is to perform an act of reversal: imagine on the back cover of *The Trial,* "This is Charyn turned Czechoslovakian picaro . . ." or "Will be read along with the Charyns, Coovers, Robbinses, and Vonneguts" on the cover of *The Sound and the Fury.*

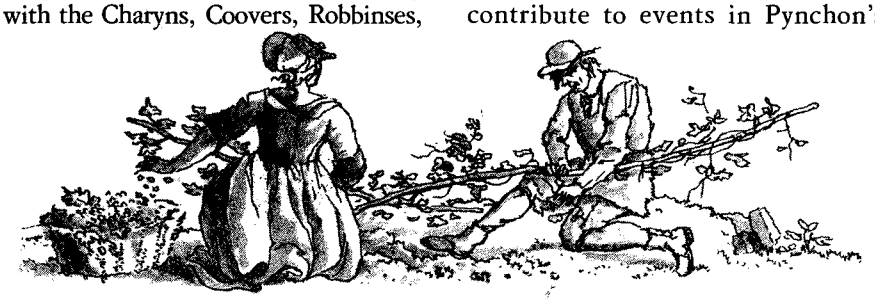
Darlin' Bill is Charyn's fifteenth novel. What is most striking is that, after so much printed paper, Charyn is still so puerile. So much for the idea that man is constantly improving. *Darlin' Bill* should be execrated, not praised. It has nothing to recommend it. It is, in a word, trash. Not because it gives excess attention to sex—although it does have more than its share of extramarital pulsations—but because it fails no matter how it is viewed. I suppose that Charyn is attempting what can be referred to, for the sake of convenience, as a "new novel." Although prose works falling under that heading are variform, a basic underlying characteristic is that they work to bring the reader's attention to the fact that he or she is reading a novel. Surprise! But good authors build an edifice upon that foundation; they address the elements of fiction and reality. Thomas Pynchon (his apparent case of paranoia notwithstanding) is one of the better ones. He, in his novels, attempts to show that there are alternate realities, i.e. the obvious or accepted cause or causes of an event are not necessarily the ultimate or only ones; Something Else may be at the bottom, yet what It is or where the bottom is remain to be discovered. Pynchon writes his own—maddening—history. Cabals and international conspiracies, forces beyond the pale and the Second Law of Thermodynamics all contribute to events in Pynchon's novels. Fiction and reality are interfused; no parting line is discernible. He seems to ask: "How do you know what you know or believe what you believe? Aren't the possibilities presented within my pages as plausible as what you accept?"

> ". . . shrewd, tough, funny and triumphantly detailed—a thoroughly remarkable imaginative achievement."
>
> —*New York Times Book Review*

Although this vision may seem absurd (as in ridiculous, not Theatre of), we have seen examples of it: empty praise. A listener who once knew what good music sounds like is confronted with a barrage from those hailing the late Lennon: radio, TV, magazines, newspapers, instant books. Soon he begins to wonder about what he once knew. If a sufficient number of people include Charyn in a listing of first-rate novelists, then the thing which is not becomes the thing that is. Reality is remade.

Elements of fact are required in the new novel (or "fabulation," as Robert Scholes terms it). Real characters abound, particularly those about which legends have grown (vide E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime,* which includes Harry Houdini, J.P. Morgan, Emma Goldman any many more). The author (fabulator) uses these people to his own ends; they often interact with or at least in some way have an impact on the fictional characters.

Charyn uses Wild Bill Hickok. A good choice. While it is well-known that figures from the Old West have been, through folk tales, made bigger than life (Kit Carson, Deadwood Dick, Calamity Jane, etc. all evoke fantastic images), James Butler Hickok *did* cut a figure in reality that was out of the ordinary. Two historians, Joe B. Frantz and Julian Ernest Choate, Jr., describe Hickok thusly: "Six feet tall, 175 pounds, sinuous, graceful, cool, long wavy brown hair worn shoulder-length, flowing moustache, delicate hands, almost feminine feet, low voiced, impec-



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cably dressed, nerveless. . . ."* Hickok's actual exploits make puffery superfluous. Charyn can't leave well enough alone. He may be using Hickok to his own ends, but what those ends are is never made clear, and the means which he employs are childish, pointless ramblings.

Darlin' Bill is a tale told by Sally Ovenshine, who meets Hickok in Galveston, Texas, where he was serving as a Union scout. The tale ends with Hickok's death in Deadwood, South Dakota in 1876, by the guns of Jack McCall. Literally and figuratively a cheap shot. And that's precisely what Jerome Charyn is. Take a page from Thomas Berger *(Little Big Man),* the style of Kurt Vonnegut (simplistic sentences and ideas) and characterizations from Tom Robbins (Sally Ovenshine, Bonanza Jellybean—curiously similar), remove their originality and mix them together. *Darlin' Bill* results; it's not even a half-baked effort. Kafka, indeed! □

**The American Cowboy; The Myth and The Reality* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1955).

Passion's Paradoxical Slave

William O. Douglas: *The Court Years: 1939 - 1975: The Autobiography of William O. Douglas;* Random House; New York.

James F. Simon: *Independent Journey: The Life of William O. Douglas;* Harper & Row; New York.

by Edward J. Lynch

Early during his tenure on the Supreme Court, Justice William Orville Douglas witnessed an exchange in which Justice Stanley Reed, undecided on a case during a judicial conference, indicated that his gut instincts inclined one way, but he was unready to be recorded on the case. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes responded that he would record Reed's vote, claiming that if Reed's gut inclined one way, his mind was more than sufficiently capable of finding a rationale to support the inclination. Hughes later elaborated to Douglas that 90% of judicial decisions involve developing the rationale to support one's gut instincts. This advice would guide Justice Douglas through 36 years on the Supreme Court.

Dr. Lynch is a frequent contributor to these pages.

Justice Douglas learned early and clung passionately to the belief that the human mind exists to develop explanations for fulfilling one's appetites. Casting aside the notion that the mind exists to discipline the appetites, Douglas accumulated one of the most prolific records on the Supreme Court. This record is not merely a consequence of longevity, for he regularly wrote more opinions (primarily dissenting opinions) than his fellow justices. Of course, this rationale simplified Douglas's judicial task. He did not have to struggle with the law, with history or with the competing claims that inspired more thoughtful men to deliberation. He merely had to discern his gut instincts and assert those prejudices as his reading of the law of the land. The idolatry reflected in James Simon's biography is an accurate portrayal of the extent to which Justice Douglas's prejudices were in tune with the inclinations of the more liberal elements of our times. This idolatry and these prejudices also enable one to understand the ways in which the modern judiciary is undermining the Constitution that it is sworn to uphold.

Simon would have his reader believe that his subject was a complex, paradoxical man; he recounts many of the alleged paradoxes, then leaves them standing, as if they were simply a reflection of the Douglas's complexity, rather than a consequence of the extremely simplistic attitude that he took toward his fellow citizens and his work. Douglas as judge proclaimed his love of humanity, yet he was a failure as a father, a deplorable husband to his first three wives, and an insufferable boss to his law clerks and others who worked with him. He loved humanity, yet he despised people.

Douglas proclaimed that one of his leading purposes was to keep government off the backs of the people. Yet much of his record as a public official, whether of the Securities and Exchange Commission or the Supreme Court, involved him in upholding extensions of governmental power. Frequently he extended the power of the national government as a means of restricting state and local governments, an idea of "keeping government off the backs of the people" that differs from the meaning that the authors of the Constitution would have associated with the term. Douglas was glad to keep government off the backs of some people, but only the ones who lacked an identifiable affiliation with any corporation.

Douglas proclaimed loud and long his admiration of the First Amendment, and he borrows approvingly from Robert Hutchins's terminology to suggest that the American founders intended to establish a "society of the Dialogue." However, Douglas himself was never interested in doing much discussing. He praised Hughes as Chief Justice largely because he held the shortest judicial conferences. He despised Harlan Fiske Stone's conferences because they often turned into extended disquisitions about the meaning of odd facts and obscure clauses. He, apparently alone among justices, did not believe that the workload of the court has expanded beyond the capacity of the sitting judges. Judges who read cases too closely or at too great length are merely dawdlers. He especially despised what he termed "proselytizers," primarily Felix Frank-

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furter, because they were always trying to convince others on the Court to go along with them. Apparently Frankfurter believed that the purpose of judicial positions was to elicit the truth of the law rather than to affirm the prejudices of the judges. Douglas used his opinions to assert his reading of the Constitution and the laws, and cared little about discussing how his reading related to any contrary views. Frequently he stood alone, and few scholars defend either the historical or philosophic soundness of the positions that resulted. Douglas's admirers approve of his policy stands more than his jurisprudence. His autobiography (one suspects all 31 of his books) assume the same tone. He makes no effort to persuade those who might doubt his assertions. Even in high public office, Justice Douglas remained essentially a private man.

One searches both of these books in vain for a larger perspective on Douglas's judicial career. Simon makes little effort to disguise his admiration among the accounts of Douglas's activities. Yes, he concedes the character flaws that Douglas, like any other mortal, had. Yes, he acknowledges that many of Douglas's opinions might have stood on firmer constitutional ground or that they might have been assisted by some decent historical research. He admits that they are not respected by scholars or lawyers (except by those who share his prejudices). Simon's main defect is that he attempts to reduce Douglas, trying to explain his character through psychobabble, or attempting to describe the conflict between Frankfurter and Douglas as a product of different academic affiliations. Sadly, the snide references to "Harvards" strung throughout Douglas's text indicate that Simon may be seeing the quarrel in the same light that Douglas did. Nonetheless, such reductions avoid the serious differences between Douglas and Frankfurter, and they evade discussion of the serious problem of Douglas's judicial methods.

Throughout his judicial career, William O. Douglas was most noted for his support of positions embraced by the American Civil Liberties Union and other civil liberties. He speaks glowingly of "freedom of expression," and many of his opinions would have extended the First Amendment to cover many forms of activity. Ultimately, however, Douglas's position on the First Amendment must degrade political speech. A "society of the Dialogue" is possible only where people are engaged in the responsible pursuit of truth. The right to speak carries with it a duty to listen, to explain and defend one's positions and to attempt to refute conflicting positions. Douglas never spoke of the duties associated with responsible political speech; he was content simply to assert his own positions rather than to engage in the discussion that might convince his fellow justices that his reading of the Constitution was better than their readings. Douglas did not participate in the discussions available to him, and he rarely defended such speech in his opinions. Most commonly, the people he was defending were asserters much like himself, i.e. people speaking independently of any notion of responsibility for their words. Such babbling is not properly political speech, for it has nothing to do with the common concerns of citizens. Douglas read the First Amendment to defend "freedom of expression": what he in fact advocated was the right to prattle. In the cacophony of many independent people asserting their own positions, the pursuit of truth that is essential to true dialogue becomes impossible. Simon frequently writes of Douglas's "philosophy," but clearly he means ideology. In the rejection of all competing opinions that characterizes Douglas's stance, philosophy is impossible.

Douglas's rejection of the written Constitution extends beyond the amendments that he praised. Beyond Douglas's paradoxical claim to admire dialogue and expression, the other animating impulse of his life appears to have been an admiration for the "little guy." Douglas and the sociological reductionists among his admirers would have one believe that this impulse originated in his youthful experiences growing up on the "wrong side of the tracks" in Yakima, Washington. Certainly the impulse to side with the little fellow, the downtrodden and the underprivileged is pervasive in any democratic society. It also accords well with the populist and progressive sentiments that dominated Douglas's time. But this impulse is supposed to be disciplined in a society that believes that people are all created equal and are therefore equal in the eyes of the law. Both Douglas and Simon attest to Douglas's passion against the "rich," the "well-to-do" and, especially, the large corporations that have come to play an important role in our economic and social lives.

Whatever passion a citizen might feel against these prominent portions of society, a judge should realize that the validity of claims before the court depends upon the propriety of the argument, not the socioeconomic status of the claimant making the argument. But Douglas was a judge who did not believe that his mind should control his passions, and he did not stop to consider that, on occasion, his passions

"Virtually no one, friend or foe, disputes that Douglas was a genius."
—*The Nation*

"Douglas was . . . the first and perhaps the only true representative of . . . authentic and robust phase of American legal theory to reach the Supreme Court."
—*New York Review of Books*

"[Justice Douglas] gave us a reason for hope."
—*Business Week* (!?)

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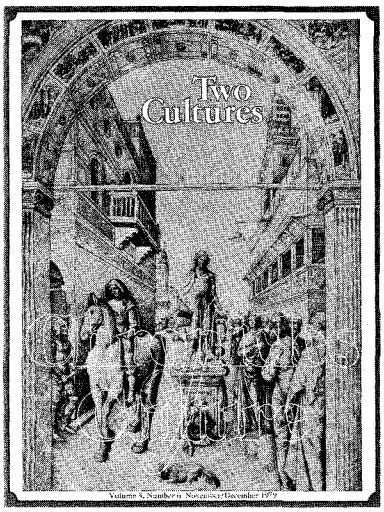
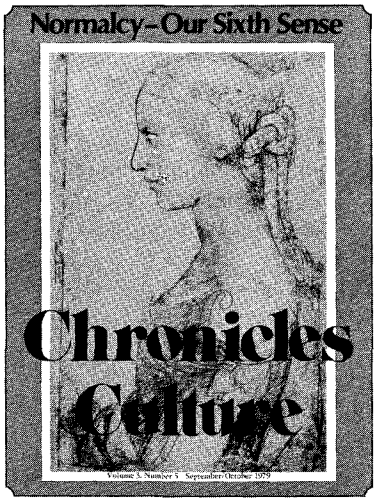
TWO CULTURES

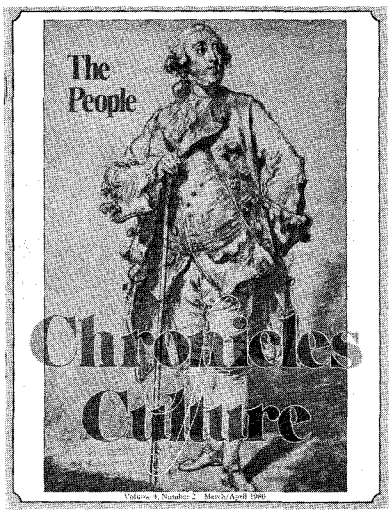


NORMALCY—OUR SIXTH SENSE

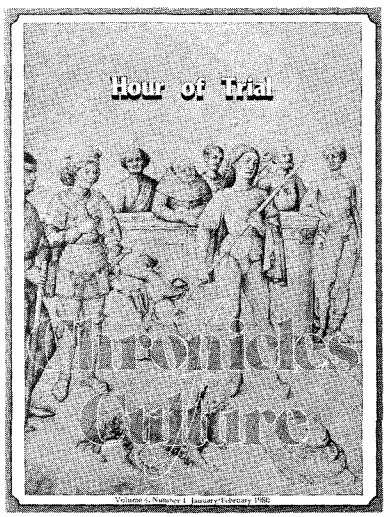


POLITICS & HATRED

THE PEOPLE

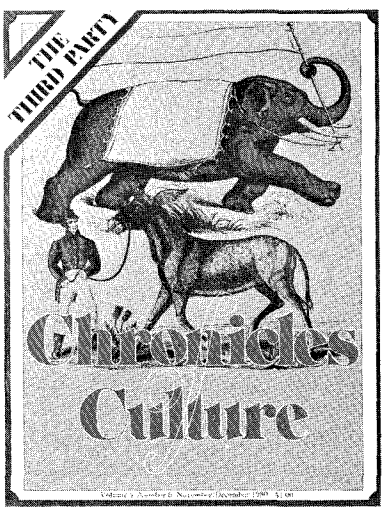


HOUR OF TRIAL

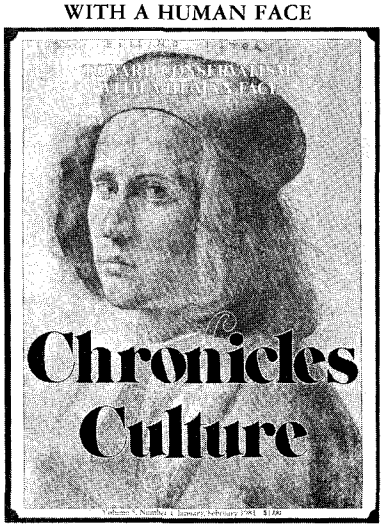


THE CONSERVATIVE PRINCIPLE

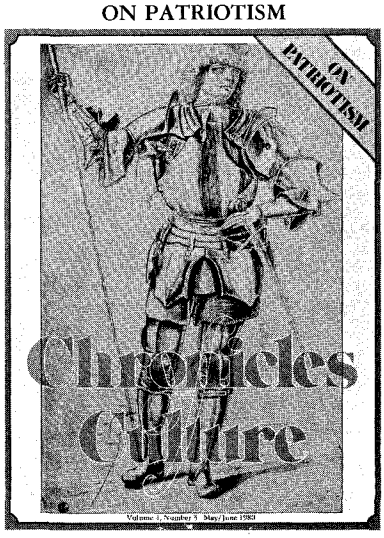
THE THIRD PARTY



TOWARD CONSERVATISM WITH A HUMAN FACE



ON PATRIOTISM



Chronicles of Culture

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS (above): Jacopo Bellini (1424-1470), Timoteo Viti (1469-1523), Thomas Nast (1840-1902), Jean Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805), Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516), Francesco Squarcione (1394-1474). Also featuring original vignettes by Warren Chappell.

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might violate the principles of equality that sustain the democratic form of our government.

Douglas emerges as a truly paradoxical jurist. Intensely devoted to the idea that freedom of "expression" is essential to American society, he wound up contributing to the conditions that diminish respect for political speech. Intensely devoted to the democratic impulse to protect the little man, he wound up subverting the principle of equality before the law that is a precondition for responsible democracy. Unable to discipline his appetites, he rationalized, and his idolators treat his impulsiveness as a virtue. Although he spoke as a defender of freedom, he remained paradoxically a slave of his own passions. Simon treats Douglas as an intellectual giant, but true giants are never as systematically and stubbornly shortsighted as William Orville Douglas. The recovery of respect for political speech, and the restoration of equality as the democratic principle, can begin only after acknowledging the slavish consequences of Douglas's paradoxical passions. □

The Vicissitudes of Nonconformism

Raymond Sokolov: *Wayward Reporter: The Life of A. J. Liebling;* Harper & Row; New York.

***On Mencken;* Edited by John Dorsey; Alfred A. Knopf; New York.**

by Edward J. Walsh

Abbot Joseph Liebling and Henry Louis Mencken were men of the same era. Though Mencken was born 24 years earlier than Liebling, their deaths came but eight years apart. Their careers in American letters met with vastly contrasting degrees of success: Mencken, still called the "Sage of Baltimore," was and is adulated as the pre-eminent American journalist/philosopher. Liebling, on the contrary, is all but forgotten, not only by the public, but also by his successors in the trade. Though he was for nearly 30 years the star columnist/reporter of *The New Yorker,* he was never recognized even as that by anyone who did not read that magazine. Mencken was known, in his day, as a political commentator, linguist, satirist and *bon vivant.* Liebling was a tragic figure whose career reflected the dark side of literary ambition: he was prolific—but unremembered. The big break in fiction always eluded him. Instead, he wrote newspaper criticism and Zolaesque pieces on New York's low life; he died at age 59, a gasping, 250-pound glutton.

But there is an important connection evident between the lives and works of Liebling and Mencken, just as there are, today, links among the gentlemen and ladies of the press, particularly those of the so-called national media, that have nothing to do with whether they are collectively acquainted. It is very likely that Mencken and Liebling met at some point, although a friendship is not mentioned in either Sokolov's biography of Liebling or Dorsey's anthology of essays on Mencken. The connection is that they both witnessed journalism become a major force in American life, and they both used it to put their personal values on display. Both acknowledged that they did so, and both happened to hold opinions that were considered scandalous during their lifetimes. But neither Mencken nor Liebling realized, as they promoted and praised total, untrammeled freedom of the press, that they were blazing the path for what was daringly called "advocacy journalism" fifteen years ago, and is today institutionalized at major press outlets as "New Journalism." Tom Wolfe may have invented the term, and he edited a book of Vietnam-era essays that displayed the technique, but it can be found in hundreds of Liebling and Mencken pieces of fifty years ago. And if "advocacy" or "new" journalism means anything, it means that the line between news writing and editorial writing is blurred beyond recognition. The reporter's interpretation of events rather than his description of them is what appears as news. Without much pretense at discretion, "reporters" at the sophisticated periodicals can write whatever they want as long as they include, at a minimum, the phrase "informed sources suggested," or something similar. Years ago, reporters were forbidden to use "it appeared" or even "it seemed that." With the spread of advocacy reporting, that prohibition was consigned to the wastebasket, as obsolete as the notion of reporters being reporters of the news. Journalism has become what Mencken triumphantly practiced and what Liebling tried with all his heart to do.

But to criticize the trend towards interpretative reporting as found on the front pages of many of today's major newspapers is not to condemn interpretative writing. Both Mencken and Liebling began as reporters and served time covering fires, strikes, murders and the rest of the usual news beat. It was only when they had graduated to editorial jobs, Mencken at the Baltimore *Evening Sun* in 1910 and Liebling at *The New Yorker* in 1935, that they wrote exhortatively for the public.

Raymond Sokolov has written a sympathetic and industriously researched biography of Liebling, a man who would never have dreamed that he would be the subject of a book. He has tracked down the reason that the young Liebling was fired by the *New York Times*—for slipping a false name into an obscure sports story—and chronicles sensitively Liebling's 30-year love for his first wife, Ann, who became incurably mentally ill. But *Wayward Reporter* is spoiled

Mr. Walsh is a frequent contributor to these pages.

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by Sokolov's obsequious descriptions of Liebling's political leftism, which are rather ineptly concealed praise. He tells us that Liebling in his "Wayward Press" columns "wrote more freely and pointedly about the evils of monopolistic newspaper publishers and of right-wing witch-hunting anti-communists [a record for consecutive hyphenated nouns, I think], of anti-labor reactionaries and of threats from all sides to freedom of the press and other First Amendment rights." If Sokolov really thinks like that, he is as paranoid as he suggests his subject must have been. His narrative of Liebling's involvement in the Hiss-Chambers trial is worse, a belated postscript to the pro-Hiss agitprop that has never died. The author's tone here turns abruptly and noticeably mean. He abandons his heretofore detached interest in Liebling to hurl slurs at Professor Allen Weinstein, author of *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case,* who had begun his research convinced of Hiss's innocence and finished sure of his guilt. Sokolov refers to Whittaker Chambers as "a morally and politically corrupt journalist," a smear surely less temperate than Weinstein's criticism of Liebling, who befriended Hiss and aided his lawyers by passing along information on Chambers's connection with the Communist Party.

If Sokolov set out to use Liebling as a prop, however, he was fortunately diverted by the poignant tragedy of the writer's life. For Liebling himself was ineffectual as a propagandist, a role he might have tried in still another attempt to gain the national recognition that came so easily to his contemporary, Ernest Hemingway. Like Hemingway, he wrote pieces about drunks, waiters and washed-up boxers; unlike him, Liebling's attempts at fiction were unknown to all but his most intimate friends. His leftism had something to do with resentment, as it so often does: Liebling never forgave his father, a New York Jew, for leaving Manhattan for a suburban enclave in Far Rockaway. For Liebling, New York City was a panoramic tableau of life, glamour and deprivation side by side. Liebling always empathized with the tragic. Perhaps that is why his writing never achieved the national audience he sought. Unless a writer is indeed a Zola or a de Maupassant, the picaresque is not the route to fame. Liebling wrote some interesting and even funny pieces and aimed some timely barbs at the stuffed shirts in the publishing business. But like today's *New Yorker,* which publishes anything that appeals to the editor (quality is an afterthought), Liebling wrote for himself alone, purging private demons and poking fun at people he didn't like in pieces and books that were almost universally ignored. His life was eventful enough to provide a script for a contemporary left-liberal like Sokolov, but the result is less eloquent than Liebling's own writing.

Dorsey's anthology, *On Mencken,* consists of nine essays by men who knew him well and have devoted years to studying his work, among them William Manchester, Alistair Cooke and Alfred A. Knopf, Mencken's publisher. The volume contains representative selections of his writing, including political reporting, literary criticism and several of his curmudgeonly pieces on a variety of topics. The essays, typical of commemoratives, are congenial but fulsome in their praise for the man, which makes one wonder: What was the point in writing them? The gist of all of them is that Mencken's convictions ring loudly and clearly in all his work; heaps of praise and repetitious amens from his friends don't add to Mencken's standing in American letters. The point, however, is the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, which prompted who knows how many articles, seminars and scholarly papers on the man and his work.

For Mencken, like very few others of his profession, has become an institution, a "school," so to speak. It has evolved, over the years, into an attitude that suggests such qualities as individuality, daring and skepticism, which are, to Mencken's fans and imitators, inherently noble. This is the theme that flows uninterrupted through these nine essays.

But nonconformism and devil-may-care are not qualities of thought, but of *manner.* Mencken wrote copiously on philosophical subjects, but said little that had not been said before. In the most illuminating essay in the book, Charles Fecher tells us that Mencken was a "Renaissance man," and that "he mirrored his own age." His essays on religion and science, debunking the first and bowing to the second, were reflections of an ideology Mencken did not invent but accepted. His distrust of politicians, in an era of widespread political corruption and scandal, was not unique. His "libertarian" aversion to government in all its forms was mainly the Enlightenment notion that man, especially atheistic man, was the measure of all things.

What is most notable about Mencken is that no one, certainly not the contributors to *On Mencken,* has anything negative to say about him, though he administered countless bashings himself. Was Mencken intimidating? No doubt of that. What's more, he had a genial wit that seemed to counterpoise every harsh sentence he wrote. To say that he never *deeply* offended anyone is probably to come very close to the truth. He made hard jokes about nonintellectuals, "the vast herd of human blanks" and "the lower orders," but was eternally civil and courteous, even to bootblacks. He castigated churchmen, but

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he was an admirer of Cardinal Gibbon, prelate of Maryland. Was there something in his personal constitution, and even in his writing, that suggested he did not mean what he said—at least when he sounded malicious? He was never spiteful or small-minded or deliberately cruel. Carl Bode, a contributor to *On Mencken* and founder of the Mencken Society, calls him an Aristotelian: he admired moderation and disliked change, abruptness, chaos. His splashy broadsides at establishment values and institutions to the contrary, he believed that values and institutions were necessary. He did not go to church, but he did not object to others going.

Mencken was a man of principled judgment and personal rectitude which sprang from his belief in rationality and moderation. His legacy, however, has been something else. He is not esteemed for his principles, but for his prose style and the controversy he stirred. If his personal discretion did not come from an historically spurious ideology, it came from his intellectual consistency. But the virtues of consistency and discretion are not what H.L. Mencken is known for. If he had written like Cotton Mather, with whom he shared those qualities, no one today would know he existed. Instead, unfortunately, Mencken is idolized for his mischievous style, his brazenness and his iconoclasm, which have been thoroughly filtered into contemporary literature and journalism. That he said outrageous things about religious faith and the middle-class grind is remembered; that he lived quietly and in accord with a moral code—honor, he called it—is not. His wisecracks about the "booboisie" and politicians as "scoundrels and swine" are rehashed, but his political thinking, rooted in Aristotle, is not. This is played out in the essays of *On Mencken:* his jokes, his gimmicks of language, his *style* are conspicuous. That he lived nearly all his life in the same house and that he was essentially a man of moderation are looked on by all as a curiosity.

This said, it remains that all men are responsible for what they leave of themselves for history. Mencken enthroned artistic freedom as a principle, although he was disgusted by Dreiser's pornographic play, *The Hand of the Potter,* and told him so. Like other polemicists of his day, he did not foresee the spectacular metamorphosis of journalism from the profession of precise writers who loved language, like himself, to a visceral force in the nation's life with the power to fashion and manipulate ideas. Mencken was of the generation of newspapermen who confined the editorials to the editorial page, and in them paid homage to orthodoxy, albeit with measured irreverence. No matter what has been said about his irreverence, he was not a radical social critic. But those who discuss ideas are responsible if their language is misunderstood or misused. Mencken today is considered the father of everything from journalistic name-calling to upper-class smugness. His name is usurped by the name-callers and is pinned on the noisy rich. But while Mencken indulged in name-calling and never apologized for who he was, his writing and his life had decisiveness and substance that is unknown to many of his admirers. This is not said to criticize the essayists of *On Mencken.* But in their adulation of the man, they said nothing about the impact on his legacy of a less-hardy breed of journalists, who picked it clean of its tongue-in-cheek iconoclasm, leaving the substance to be forgotten or scorned. □

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

The Haves, Have-Nots and Have-Littles

"Before I had read even the first word of George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* I knew it possessed at least one great merit: it drives leftists into a frenzied dance of rage . . . . Leftists will have their hands full with this gentleman, for with wit, grace and erudition Gilder provides capitalism with a metaphysical and moral foundation and infuses that much-maligned economic system with a high sense of drama that will amaze even the most ardent devotees of the free market. Over one hundred years after Karl Marx tolled the bells of capitalism's demise, George Gilder insists that the old girl still thrives—or at least will, if friend and foe alike will stop trying to hurry her into the grave."

from "Wait a Moment, George . . ."
by James J. Thompson, Jr.

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Waste of Money—Perceptibles
The American Proscenium
Stage—Screen—Art—Music
Correspondence—Liberal Culture
Journalism

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She Who Can't Stop Talking

Susan Sontag: *Under the Sign of Saturn;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Joseph Schwartz

It was a happy accident to have Constance Folger do the jacket design for this latest collection of Susan Sontag's essays. Her inspired drawing of a baobab tree is a wickedly accurate image of Sontag's work. Everyone who has read Saint Exupéry's *The Little Prince* knows the trouble with the terrible baobab. It is "something you will never, never be able to get rid of if you attend to it too late. It spreads over the entire planet. It bores clear through with its roots. And if the planet is too small, and the baobabs are too many, they split the planet." One must pull up regularly all of the baobabs at the earliest possible moment when they can be distinguished from the rose bushes which they so closely resemble. The little prince was quite correct, "it is a question of discipline." Miss Sontag's central critical problem is the absence of the firmness of mind needed to distinguish between rose bushes and baobabs. Not being able to do so, her mind, like the tiny planet, is fractured by the uncontrollable growth of the baobabs. It is also, curiously enough, this quality which makes her work so representative of some contemporary trends in criticism: provincialism, the exhaustive (and exhausting) pursuit of the trivial, the worship of fashion, the studied determination to be new, to be "with it" (while at the same time leading the way).

This particular collection is characterized by a number of valuable and astute insights, albeit unwitting ones, into Sontag by Sontag. Many of her comments on the figures in this volume, serendipitously enough, are excellent descriptions of her own mind and work. For example, on Roland Barthes:

> It was not a question of knowledge (he couldn't have known much about some of the subjects he wrote about) but of alertness, a fastidious transcription of what *could* be thought about something, once it swam into the stream of attention. There was always some fine net of classification into which the phenomenon could be tipped.

And, again, of Barthes, "a profound love of appearances . . . colors his work." How apt both descriptions are of the writer who lives on the surface of her subjects. What a clever way of describing the thin, inquisitive mind. A taxonomist of the trivial, Sontag makes a habit of giving significance to the minor. Her work reminds one of those tiresome, endless reviews by Pauline Kael of soon-to-be-forgotten films. Why take up all that space with concern for an attenuated object? The answer can be found in Sontag's characterization of Hans-Jurgen Syberberg: "he can't stop talking." Long after Sontag has made whatever modest point could possibly be made in an essay, the "voice . . . goes on and on." She is breathless not from the excitement of discovery, but from a compulsive desire to continue. Why a given essay ends remains a mystery; there is no logical closure. She has suggested that there may be an ethical dimension to structure, and if that can be considered as a possibility, her style would suggest that she is at a loss because of some insecurity concerning values. She must worry the subject like a cranky terrier does a bone, and, as an unintentional parody of academic method, call for help from whatever sources come to mind. For example, the subject is grief, which reminds her of Heine's poem, which reminds her of an essay by Freud, which reminds her of a book by the Mitscherlichs, which reminds her of . . . and so it goes. As a critic she finds herself far more interesting than any object she confronts. Being so confident of her own personality, she will of course be prodigal in displaying her mind. This habit may be explained also in part by a passion for showing off. Yet it indicates something deeper, a bondless relationship with reality. "When it is a matter of baobabs, that always means a catastrophe."

The resulting nervous prose reveals an effort to clarify when, secretly or subconsciously, one feels clarification may be hopeless.

> The movement to disestablish the 'author' has been at work for over a hundred years. From the start, the impetus was—and still is—apocalyptic: vivid with complaint and jubilation at the convulsive decay of old social orders, borne up by that worldwide sense of living through a revolutionary movement which continues to animate most moral and intellectual excellence.

A structure of sense can be ferreted out of something like this, but after doing so a number of times and discovering little of consequence, the reader is not altogether unjustified in letting his eye pass over it with a weary sigh. If it means that modern writers refuse to be "morally useful to the community," as she says later, the judgment is as nondiscriminating as the prose is futile. What modern writers? The way she gets into such difficulty is simple enough. Antonin Artaud is for her *the* representative modern artist, "the pure victim of his consciousness," and, that being so, modern literature must be the medium by which "a singular personality heroically exposes itself." Thus modern authors will not be morally useful to the community. What has she read or not read as the basis for such a generalization? Another comment on Barthes is self-discerning: "He was not curious

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enough to let his reading interfere with his writing." Maybe that is why Artaud so fascinates her; he is "relevant and understandable as long as one mainly refers to his ideas without reading much of his work."

Another rhetorical abuse characterizes her prose: the grandiose comment on the relatively minor figure, the comment defying debate since it is uttered so confidently as fixed dogma. For example, of Elias Canetti: "Rarely has anyone been so at home in the mind, with so little ambivalence." Since the statement is not proved, the rhetorical stance must be noted; the statement insists by inference that everyone knows this to be true. Sometimes the parenthetical reference is used in the same way: "(expressing the Church's perennial fear of the open crowd)." The parenthesis confirms the self-evident character of the statement, since one need only be reminded of it. At times like this, the reader can only halt the breathless, phony urgency of her prose by asking for hard evidence. What of sainthood by acclamation, the architectural design of churches with huge squares, Eucharistic Congresses? Or this: "Artaud changed the understanding of what was serious, what was worth doing. Brecht is the century's only other writer on the theater whose importance and profundity conceivably rival Artaud's." (Artaud? Brecht?) What of Shaw, Claudel, Synge, O'Neill and Wilder? The statement is made even more puzzling when we are subsequently told that "there is no way to use Artaud that stays true to him," that he "remains profoundly indigestible." The evaluative judgment above is the kind of thing one might say to a class of sophomores when grown-ups are not around to challenge it. A final example of her rhetorical incivility is, "The protagonists of this trilogy about Germany —Ludwig II, Karl May, Hitler—are all megalomaniacs, liars, reckless dreamers, virtuosi of the grandiose." A pretty grandiose statement in itself, but what is the intent? Is Hitler made smaller or are Ludwig and Karl May (Karl May?) made somehow larger? Surely, they are not equally nor with the same intensity of attitude and purpose megalomaniacs, liars and dreamers. Is it an instance of making a fuss over the unimportant or a way of reducing the significance of the threatening? Oh, well, all are probably fascists and deserve equal censure for their failings.

It is a large net Sontag casts when discussing "Fascinating Fascism": Hitler, *the* subject of the 20th century, Leni Riefenstahl, Busby Berkeley's *The Gang's All Here,* Stanley Kubrick's *2001,* Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (Disney invited Riefenstahl to Hollywood), the African Nuba and the art of the gymnast—among others. Fascist aesthetics includes the celebration of the primitive:

> . . . a preoccupation with situations of control, submissive behaviour, extravagant effort . . . the endurance of pain . . . egomania and servitude . . . dominion and enslavement take the form of characteristic pageantry; the massing of groups of people; the turning of people into things, the multiplication or replication of things; and the grouping of people/things around an all-powerful, hypnotic leader-figure or force.

The list above is problematical but instructive. Looking at it with care, one sees that it can be made to apply to almost anything. One has a convenient weapon, by way of the paradigm, to condemn anything. But what of the mixed principle of classification: fascist aesthetics is confused with fascist art and fascist themes. She avoids the more difficult and interesting question, that of whether a political ambience can affect the senses so as to alter the metaphysics of perception, because she is more interested in labels. Is there also a democratic aesthetics, a monarchical aesthetics, an oligarchical aesthetics? Such labels, I think, make most of us uncomfortable.

Let me be specific in showing how she applies her yardstick. A Riefenstahl film, not one of the documentaries, is described as illustrating the fascist aesthetics. It is concerned with mountain-climbing, since mountain-climbing is a visually irresistible metaphor for unlimited aspiration toward a higher mystic goal, "concretized later in Führer worship." ("The Snows of Kilimanjaro"?) The film also suggests that the ultimate affirmation and escape from self is in a brotherhood of courage and death. *(The Three Musketeers?)* We are warned against those works which contain a longing for high places, the challenge and ordeal of the primitive, achieved community, everyday reality transcended through self-control and submission, concerns with power. Her one attempt at a philosophical base for all this nonsense is the idea that fascist aesthetics is based on containment of vital sources, something confined, held in. Is this different from Goethe's notion that art exists within limitations? If so, how? How much she must fear and hate the very idea of authority. Need she be reminded that "author" has the same root?

Sontag spends so much time on this subject because she feels we are unable "to detect the fascist longings in our midst." Sontag-Comstock will ferret out the enemy of her choosing by giving it a label against which it has no defense. Here is the yardstick syllogism she uses:

Fascist aesthetics is to be feared and

"A first-rate critic . . . Sontag makes thought grow."
—*New York Times*

". . . one of our most earnest, high-minded, and often brilliant literary essayists."
—*Chicago Tribune*

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despised. Veneration of the family is part of fascist aesthetics. Therefore, veneration of the family is to be feared and despised.

The cautionary enthymeme becomes: be suspicious of those who venerate family, since they are probably fascists at heart.

Examining, even briefly, why Paul Goodman and Walter Benjamin are the two greatest influences on her can suffice for a summary. Goodman is the only American writer, she admits, from whom she learned anything, because he tried to do so many things equally well. She is astonished by the failure of his contemporaries to appreciate his being an "academic freeloader," the gifted amateur who had the confidence to think he was so smart about so many things. Not being recognized or rewarded for what he was is especially poignant for one who, perhaps, anticipates the same fate. Benjamin is important because "he didn't like to read what everybody else was reading," because he was unable to do sustained work and made the essay his characteristic form, and because he thought the "ethical task of the modern writer to be not a creator but a destroyer—a destroyer of shallow inwardness, the consoling notion of the universally human, dilettantish creativity, and empty phrases." Goodman and Benjamin shared one crucial critical idea: they took up arms against what Sontag calls "the traditional enemy"—those who hold "received ideas." We all know what such code words signify. In an earlier essay she wrote, "The most interesting ideas are heresies." The critical center of Sontag should now emerge with clarity for the reader. Sontag has herself spelled it out exactly enough. To perceive heresies as "most interesting" without understanding that any heresy is merely a malformed slip-off section of orthodoxy causes one to pursue finally the unimportant, the trivial. It leads necessarily to measuring the truth by one's self rather than the other way around. Against such reckless ignorance the advice of Saint Exupéry's aviator is well worth repeating: "Children, watch out for baobabs!" □

On Chodorov

***Fugitive Essays: Selected Writings of Frank Chodorov;* Edited by Charles H. Hamilton; Liberty Press; Indianapolis, Indiana.**

by Charles Moser

Frank Chodorov (1887-1966) will be remembered in American intellectual history as an important formative influence on certain currents within our politics. This volume, a convenient collection of his writings drawn often from not-very-well-known publications, provides an excellent introduction to his thought.

Prefaced by a biography of Chodorov by Charles Hamilton, the book is divided into a rather large number of sections (11), each including from two to seven essays. Some of the essays are individual chapters from his books, but others were short pieces published originally in periodicals, most especially *Analysis,* which he edited from 1944 to 1951; *Human Events,* with which he was associated in its early years; and *National Review,* of which he was an associate editor for a time. The collection also includes a three-page selected bibliography of his writings.

Chodorov shared in a tradition of American thought, although it was in eclipse at the time he wrote, and that fact distinctly tinged his point of view. He retreated into the past for some of his intellectual heroes (Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, Henry Thoreau), but he likewise had intellectual allies more of his own time: Henry George and, especially, Albert Jay Nock, whom he knew personally and to whom he devoted memorial essays after Nock's death. Both he and Nock saw themselves as members of a small but intellectually potent remnant which upheld the old antistatist faith of individualism.

But if Chodorov's intellectual ancestry was a bit haphazard, toward the end of his life he saw the contemporary conservative movement begin to assume form and substance, and several organized entities remained after him, dedicated to advancing certain ideas which he shared—and this despite the fact that he himself rejected political organization because, he said, it "serves only as a mask for those unable to think or unwilling to act on their own convictions."

Several organizations or clusters of organizations may lay claim to all or part of Chodorov's intellectual legacy, and the divergent paths which these clusters are following in 1981 provide an interesting illustration of the fate of ideas in politics. Chodorov was connected in their early stages with a publication and an organization which still exist as pillars of traditional conservative thought: the weekly *Human Events* and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), originally formed as the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists in 1952. The impetus for the founding of ISI came from an article of Chodorov's, published around 1950, in which he envisioned something along the lines of a "lecture bureau" which would, in the second half of the 20th century, advance the idea of individualism and undo the work of collectivization which American socialist organizations had accomplished in its first half. He placed little confidence in professors as a group: since the universities were insulated from the discipline of the marketplace, they had every economic rea-

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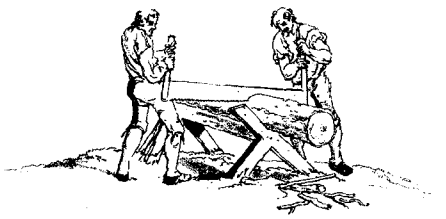
son to support the rampant collectivism of 1950. Instead, Chodorov suggested, independent lecturers should be brought to the campus from outside. They would not indoctrinate, he thought; instead they would truly "educate for liberty." Since, Chodorov had concluded, libertarians and socialists were born with inclinations toward their respective creeds, "the libertarian teaches not to 'make' libertarians, but to find them." ISI has existed since the 1950's, concentrating its quiet efforts on the nation's campuses, and it made a major intellectual contribution to the conservative political victories of 1980. However, it has moved away from Chodorov's strict dedication to individualism, symbolized by its change of name, and it has also adopted a strong anticommunist stance with which Chodorov would not have been pleased.

Similar things could be said of *Human Events,* which on its masthead declares its bias "in favor of limited constitutional government, local self-government, private enterprise and individual freedom." However, *Human Events* is strongly anticommunist in foreign policy and writes most of the time about current domestic politics. Chodorov would no doubt have disagreed with both of these approaches.

Were he alive today, Chodorov would very likely feel most comfortable with the positions of the Libertarian Party, the "party of principle" as it calls itself, whose 1980 platform was almost entirely consonant with his thought of 30 years ago. To be sure, since he was antipolitical as a matter of conviction and prided himself on never voting, Chodorov might be unhappy to see his ideas promoted by a political party—but then by this time he might reluctantly have come to agree that in our politicized age the leviathan state can be countered only through political means. Moreover, the Libertarian platform does call for the elimination of great chunks of the existing state, and also for a "none of the above" option on



every electoral ballot. ("In the event that 'none of the above' wins a plurality of votes, the elective office for that term will remain unfilled and unfunded.") In a sense, it is an antipolitical political party.

Chodorov at his best argued that true change would ensue only from ideas within the minds of individuals, not as the result of organization. "The only true values," he wrote in 1941, "are ideas, which, permeating the depths of the human mind, work in their inscrutable way toward a better world of better men." Ten years later, in the final issue of his journal, *Analysis,* he reaffirmed his faith that the anticollectivist revolution was inevitably advancing in the minds of youth. One of the few positive statements he ever made about his native land was that America was most valuable because it protected freedom of thought. He benefited from that freedom, and he was persuaded that eventually this instrumentality might bring about great and positive changes in American society.

Chodorov founded his political philosophy on the individual, whom he considered the "only reality": society for him was an abstraction constituted of actually existing individuals. Inherent in each individual is the right to life, and from that derives each person's inalienable right to own private property. Chodorov firmly rejected the false dichotomy between human rights and property rights so prevalent nowadays: "Property rights are in fact human rights," he wrote at one point. The individual must enjoy freedom as one of his highest goods, and "the essence of freedom," as Chodorov wrote in an essay on Thoreau, "is an inflexible respect for oneself." From that freedom flowed responsibility for one's own actions as well. The Libertarian Party of 1980 upholds the principle of individual responsibility by opposing such concepts as "no-fault insurance" and by advocating the responsibility of the criminal to make restitution to his victim so far as possible, though it still has difficulty with the concept of punishment for criminal acts and supports the victim's right "to pardon the criminal or wrongdoer, barring threats to the victim for this purpose."

The overarching domestic issue of Chodorov's time, as of ours, was that of the state, which he called the "modern golden calf." Chodorov always distinguished between government and the state: the former, with some reservations, was legitimate, whereas the latter could never be. Government, he argued, ought to attend to "the dispensation of justice, cheaply, and the maintenance of order," things which Chodorov plainly thought would be rather easy to accomplish in most societies. But the state, he believed along with his friend Nock, had come into being through force and duress and served as an instrument for the exploitation of certain social groups by others through such devices as tariffs, subsidies and most especially taxes, the levying of which amounted to legalized thievery for the support of a parasitic bureaucratic class. In his libertarian view of the state Chodorov differs radically from a traditionalist conservative thinker such as Edmund Burke, whose conception of the state has a transcendental dimension. He wrote in *Reflections on the Revolution in France:*

> To avoid therefore the evils of inconsistency and versatility . . . we have consecrated the state, that no man should approach to look into its defects or corruptions but with due caution; . . . that he should approach to the faults of the state as to the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude.

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Most Businessmen Have a Fairly Accurate Reading of Their Competition

How About Their Opposition?

The magazines and activist groups which mold and manipulate public opinion toward anti-capitalist goals are now big business. Their impact in recent years has grown more potent through a network of multinational support groups. The last election has given this activity a vibrant new impetus, with funds and memberships on the increase. There is now a much greater readiness to form coalitions among groups whose goals previously had seemed remote from one another.

It is clear that the conflict between the interests of the business community and these anti-capitalist forces is going to become more intense during the eighties.

Persuasion At Work is a newsletter specifically designed to keep the businessman apprised of the important developments in this opinion-making contest. Each month we offer an analysis of a publication, an organization or a movement pushing public attitudes one way or the other on an issue of importance to the business community.

These commentaries are drawn from direct sources including attendance at the meetings of activist groups, study of their promotional literature and monitoring of their periodicals.

Among the groups and issues that we've addressed in recent months:

Common Cause vs. PAC's or Business as the Fall Guy

"Thus the distaste which Common Cause holds for PAC's should come as no surprise. For it is primarily through such committees that the business community — badly mauled by the regulatory and fiscal excesses of the 1960's and 1970's — has found an effective political voice for restoring some balance and sanity to federal economic and regulatory policies. Common Cause, quite understandably, prefers fewer and less-assertive actors on the probusiness side of the political stage."

Philanthropy Proudly Raising the Banner of What in No-Man's Land? or Businessman, Alert!

"If IS [Independent Sector] uses its money, power, lobbying expertise and army of constituent members in behalf of the liberal ideology which has characterized the big foundations and the most determined elements of the nonprofit sector over the past quarter century, then the advent of IS is not good news for the business community."

Slick Anticapitalism at Your Corner Newsstand

"Much of the grist that is ground in the *Mother Jones* mill is, indeed, specifically anticorporate and anticapitalistic. The September 1980 issue has a feature story listed on the cover, 'Exxon Vs. The Sun,' accusing Exxon and other corporate giants of conspiring with the Department of Energy to prevent the development by small companies of low-cost solar energy systems. The previous issue carries a scathing attack on the safety record of a Bethlehem Steel plant in Maryland.

It is only in the context of these larger ideological goals that the businessman, or the housewife, can come to understand the motives and the biases and the range of carefully chosen subjects of a *Mother Jones* and the many ideologically allied, but less successful, periodicals and newspapers."

A Militant Challenge to the Business Community by its Unrecognized Friends

"It is our judgment that this is one group endeavor which will be gathering momentum in the months ahead. The corporations which may find themselves on the receiving end of its orchestrated complaints had best begin preparing their policy positions now. Moreover, what is at stake in this particular push for change is a rational and long-overdue challenge to the narrow concepts which generally have governed advertising policies in America. That is grist for the mental mills of every business enterprise.

CBTV [The Coalition for Better Television] is engaged in an effort which may help corporate advertisers to recognize that a free society cannot stay in business if each citizen sets his own rules and behaves as he sees fit, and that the nature of the television programs sustained by advertising is one of the most critical factors in tipping the balance toward civilized and productive living or social chaos and economic oblivion."

In this era when "corporate responsibility" has become a bludgeon used by activist groups to force corporations to meet their demands, a new level of understanding is needed by the businessman to hold his own in a kind of contest for which he has had little preparation.

Persuasion At Work is a sentinel resource to help guard a poorly protected flank.

As an introductory offer, we will send each new subscriber a gift copy of the booklet, "Corporate Responsibility: The Viability of Capitalism in an Era of Militant Demands." The subscription price is $8.00.

To order, use the adjacent post card, or send check or money order to: The Rockford Institute, 934 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103.

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Chodorov's thought is not pious at all, but rather tinnily rationalistic when he defines the state as "a number of persons who are up to no good." If one looks at the state in this light, one is justified in seeing the solution of our current difficulties in its abolition.

The Libertarian Party program of 1980 embraces just such an anarchist prescription. For example, where Chodorov composes a paean to the tax-evader as a model for us all, the Libertarian Party seeks the immediate elimination of "all criminal and civil sanctions against tax evasion." If the people withhold the material means of support for the governmental bureaucracy by refusing to pay taxes and direct it through the "whip of public opinion," as Chodorov advocated, the state may someday be reduced to a government.

If such notions seem a trifle far-fetched, we should recall Chodorov's absolute opposition to military conscription as a violation of individual liberties, elaborated in great detail in the 1980 Libertarian platform, which has for some time now been the official policy of the United States. The practical result of this libertarian aberration in public policy has been the virtual collapse of our armed forces.

Chodorov and the libertarians would consider that a desirable outcome, but mainstream conservatives and liberals would not. For if conservatives can forge alliances with libertarians on many economic issues, they are totally at odds in the foreign-policy arena, especially in their assessment of the challenge we face from the international communist movement.

Chodorov's antistatist convictions reinforced his natural attraction to pacifism: "peace and politics are antithetical," he wrote in an article opposing the United Nations. Much like Henry Kissinger, architect of the calamitous Soviet-American détente of the 1970's, Chodorov believed that free trade is the key to peace, combining political isolationism (the "natural attitude of a people," he called it) with economic internationalism. Trade, he wrote in one encomium to it, is the "harbinger of goodwill among men, and peace on earth." And again he said, "the only way to a world society is through free trade. . . . if the customer is always right, how could he be an enemy?" But by 1981 we have experience of the ways a trading partner may employ trade as a weapon, and we realize that Chodorov oversimplified reality.

As a libertarian Chodorov viewed communism either as unimportant or as something not so very different from the state system under which he himself lived. For instance, at the height of the Cold War in 1949, he remarked that communism as a philosophy was rarely taught in American schools because liberal capitalism had adopted many of its basic precepts and did not wish this to be widely recognized. The chief difference between communist and capitalist states "seems to lie in the extent and incidence of fraud," he argued. "That's all." When he analyzed communism more carefully, Chodorov maintained either that it was rooted in poverty and so could be cured through the material prosperity engendered by a free economy, or that it was a nexus of ideas which could be refuted only in the realm of ideas. Consequently he opposed any restrictions on the communists in the dissemination of their ideas but also—and rather surprisingly—advocated the relentless use of governmental force to suppress overt communist violence as a means to political power and denounced industrial strikes as "miniature war."

Although in theory Chodorov held that the government should have sufficient military strength to repel foreign invasion, he opposed foreign intervention vigorously. He praised conscientious objectors of both the First and Second World Wars, and in 1947, while denouncing the slogan "Stop communism!" as a mere mask for Western imperialism, he formulated his pacifist convictions quite clearly:

> Above all, when the time comes, we will refuse to fight, choosing the self-respect of the prison camp to the ignominy of the battlefield. It is far nobler to clean a latrine than to kill a man for profit.

One may detect here a latent anti-Americanism, a sentiment which helps to explain the otherwise puzzling libertarian indifference toward communist expansion. "We are told that we must fear the Russians," Chodorov wrote in 1954. "I am more afraid of those who, like their forebears, would compel us against our will to fight the Russians." And that was because, he professed to believe, an anticommunist mobilization would eventually lead to a totalitarian system at home in no way preferable to the communist system abroad.

Chodorov's pacifist, anti-anticommunist and anti-interventionist ideas run through the 1980 Libertarian Party platform, which at one point speaks approvingly of "resistance to such transgressions as imperialistic wars and aggressive acts of the [American] military." At another point it declares that its foreign-policy positions are based upon "the principle of non-intervention." The application of this principle leads the Libertarian Party to call for an end to the American involvement with the United Nations, to advocate the ter-

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mination of all American military alliances everywhere, and to "condemn the growing alliance between the United States government and the People's Republic of China, just as we condemn the previous alliance with the Republic of China on Taiwan."

A political philosophy which generates faulty positions must have some basic flaws. Two of these may be worth dwelling upon.

The first is what might be termed "atomism," or the implicit assumption that each individual and each nation is an entity unto itself, without obligations to other individuals or nations beyond transitory ones of mutual convenience. Chodorov nowhere says so, but I suspect he would advocate the abrogation of freely adopted agreements between individuals if changed circumstances made it inconvenient for one of them to keep his commitment. This "atomism" is quite visible in the libertarian view of abortion, which considers only the potential mother's convenience. We have already seen the intrinsic contradiction in the libertarian position on interrelationships between nations: that nations can be economically interdependent and at the same time politically completely independent. If man is a social animal, so, too, are nations: they cannot function properly without both political and economic alliances.

The right-to-life issue throws into relief a deeper flaw in the libertarian position: its desire to divorce morality from politics. "The free market," Chodorov wrote once, "is mechanistic and amoral"; but politics has a moral dimension. Clearly this was one reason for his hostility toward politics—politics raises moral questions which must be resolved collectively. But Chodorov also knew that the moral posture of politics had a great deal to do with the success of the socialist collectivism he opposed, and on one or two occasions he attempted to provide a moral underpinning for the principles of the free market. Thus in an address of 1958 he linked the free market with free will:

> Many of the persons who would abolish free choice in the marketplace logically conclude that man is not endowed with free will. . . . This premise ineluctably leads them to the denial of the soul, and, of course, the denial of God.

But Chodorov was uncomfortable with this attempt to inject morality into economics, and present-day libertarians separate morality from politics entirely, with one exception: they deny the right of any "individual, group or government [to] initiate force against any other individual, group or government." The source of morality must be the individual, they argue:

> Members of the Libertarian Party do not necessarily advocate or condone any of the practices our policies would make legal. Our exclusion of moral approval and disapproval is deliberate: . . . the wisdom of any course of peaceful action is a matter for the acting individual(s) to decide.

So, in the end, Chodorov saw things a little more clearly than do his closest followers now. Recognizing that politics simply cannot be separated from morality, as an individualist he sought to withdraw from the political sphere, and improve society through the power of example alone:

> If I do a good job on myself in the way of improving my fund of knowledge and my understanding, and of maintaining a sense of responsibility toward my judgment, the result might strike the fancy of a fellow man; if he is activated by the example to go to work on himself, my personal effort will have burgeoned into what we call social improvement. □

In the Mail

Eerdmans' Concise Bible Handbook **edited by David and Pat Alexander; Wm. B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, Michigan.** A pocket-sized paperback abridgment of *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible.* It contains book-by-book commentary, separate articles on biblical history and interpretation, maps, charts and line drawings which portray everyday life in biblical times.

Eerdmans' Concise Bible Encyclopedia **edited by Pat Alexander; Wm. B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, Michigan.** Information from *Eerdmans' Family Encyclopedia of the Bible,* arranged alphabetically. Includes historical, geographical and cultural information in simplified, nonacademic language, as well as scriptural cross-references for further study.

A New Beginning **by Ed Clark; Caroline House Publishers; Ottawa, Illinois.** The ideas of the 1980 Libertarian Party candidate for the Presidency on inflation, taxation, poverty, education and other current issues.

You Can Improve Your Child's School **by William Rioux and the Staff of the National Committee for Citizens in Education; Simon & Schuster; New York.** Questions from parents and answers from the committee on possible solutions to various problems in today's schools.

The Dragon Thread **by Laura Beheler; Hyst'ry Myst'ry House Ltd.; Garnerville, New York.** A futurist, feminist fantasy.

Transylvania and the Theory of Daco-Roman-Rumanian Continuity **edited by Louis L. Lote; Committee of Transylvania; Rochester, New York.** Seven essays on the history of Transylvania, written in English, French and German.

For Better or Worse: The American Influence in the World **edited by Allen F. Davis; Greenwood Press; Westport, Connecticut.** A collection of essays by men and women from around the world, commenting on the influence of America in culture, economy, agriculture, education, etc.

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Solzhenitsyn at Large

Edward E. Ericson, Jr.: *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision;* Wm. B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Vladimir Lakshin: *Solzhenitsyn, Tvardovsky and 'Novy Mir';* MIT Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts.

by John W. Cooper

When the pagan Mongols swept into Russia in the 13th century, Russian Christianity already had a three-hundred-year-old heritage rich in piety, monastic charity and missionary spirit. Instead of discouraging the faith, the Mongol conquest deepened the hold of Christianity on the Russians, who regarded the Church as the one institution truly their own, the source of Russian unity. The Church became a permanent symbol of Russian nationalism.

The modern-day tyrants of Russia seem to have confronted a similarly indomitable force in the pen of Solzhenitsyn, who calls not only his own nation, but the West as well, to recover the original Christian faith with its concomitant deabsolutizing of politics. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has condemned the genocidal policies and totalitarian tyranny of the Soviet system. He has condemned the materialism, anthropocentric humanism and irresponsible attitude of appeasement of the West. What Solzhenitsyn seeks to retrieve is the ancient spirit of love and communal solidarity as an ideal of Christian civilization.

Such traditionalist orthodoxy inevitably comes as something of a shock to Westerners, Americans in particular. Solzhenitsyn's words have behind them the force of integrity. He does not accept the fact that humanism, democratic capitalism and religious pluralism, though often chaotic, have brought certain rich rewards for Western civilization. He may not appreciate the diffusion of power. But he almost inevitably hits the mark in his literary, political and religious judgments. His grasp of the relationship of art and morality has thrust him into the role of prophet, a serious burden for any believer in the religion of the Cross.

Solzhenitsyn's moral vision, an interconnected theory of aesthetics, politics and faith, has been captured in Edward Ericson's *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision.* Ericson, an English professor at Calvin College, uncovers the thematic unity of Solzhenitsyn's fiction: man's universal moral struggle to respond to the Truth which transcends him. He carefully sorts through the literary treasures from *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* to *The Gulag Archipelago* and shows how Solzhenitsyn's tales of life in a concentration camp and his descriptions of the sufferings inflicted by a centralized bureaucracy reveal the true nature of the Soviet system as well as the unquenchable will-to-power in man. Ericson draws a sharp distinction between a political and an aesthetic interpretation of the novels, showing how Solzhenitsyn's insights transcend the shifting tides of political fortune. Yet, like all Russian literati, Solzhenitsyn is revealed as a writer with a moral mission:

> . . . From the beginning Solzhenitsyn's work was viewed through the wrong lens. A political approach does not penetrate to the heart of *One Day.* The novel is not, in its essence, about Stalin's inhumanity to man; it is about man's inhumanity to man. Stalin is not some aberration in an otherwise smooth progression of humaneness in history. The evil of the human heart is a universal theme: this is Solzhenitsyn's approach.

Ericson's hermeneutics is evident in his discussion of *Cancer Ward* and a character named Shulubin, a patient whose experiences and sufferings lead him to lament his subservience to Marxism and to regret that he had once "agreed to become a little man." Ericson disputes the view of some critics who equate Shulubin's "ethical socialism" with Solzhenitsyn's viewpoint, while showing that even Shulubin cannot concede that his refusal to bow before the state ultimately implies faith in God.

Finally, Ericson provides a thorough analysis of why the Western press persists in seeing Solzhenitsyn as a reactionary, chauvinistic, religious zealot with limited knowledge of the West. He presents Solzhenitsyn's vision as a coherent, defensible whole and dissects the persuasive and subtle tactics of the *Letter to the Soviet Leaders,* which urges a gradual tempering of authoritarianism. According to Solzhenitsyn, the millennium preceding the Bolshevik revolution revealed that Russia's "authoritarian order possessed a strong moral foundation, embryonic and rudimentary though it was—not the ideology of universal violence, but Christian Orthodoxy." Solzhenitsyn's open letter to Patriarch Pimen, the communist-appointed head of the Russian Orthodox Church, is deeply critical of the Church's accommodation to atheistic usurpers.

Solzhenitsyn the politician is the subject of another recent addition to the secondary literature. Vladimir Lakshin's *Solzhenitsyn, Tvardovsky and 'Novy Mir,'* including accompanying essays by Mary Chaffin, Linda Aldwinckle and the translator, Michael Glenny, proceeds from the premise that Solzhenitsyn's *The Oak and the Calf* is a one-sided account of the literary politics of Moscow in the early 1960's. Lakshin, the leading literary critic of *Novy Mir,* the journal which first pub-

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lished *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,* lashed out at Solzhenitsyn for insulting "the memory of a man who was very dear to me," Aleksandr Tvardovsky.

Tvardovsky, the talented editor who "discovered" Solzhenitsyn, died in 1971 without telling his own story. Lakshin is cut to the quick by Solzhenitsyn's "accusations and reproaches" directed at Tvardovsky. In fact, Solzhenitsyn has explained his reasons for criticizing his first publisher, how Tvardovsky "felt as though he had created me, molded me from clay." Likewise, Khrushchev had tried to use Solzhenitsyn to discredit Stalin and thereby consolidate his own power. The plan backfired. The Soviet system could not stand any internal criticism, or even honesty in a writer. By 1964 Khrushchev had been replaced and in 1974 Solzhenitsyn was exiled.

When the Moscow writers' organization voted in 1967 against the publication of Solzhenitsyn's novel, *Cancer Ward,* Tvardovsky regretfully notified him of *Novy Mir's* refusal. But when Solzhenitsyn went ahead and published it as *samizdat,* Tvardovsky felt betrayed.

Lakshin is incredulous that Solzhenitsyn could condemn the editorial board of *Novy Mir* for not having put up a "courageous resistance." He is deeply hurt by Solzhenitsyn's acerbic condescension toward Tvardovsky for refusing to stand up to the Soviet authorities. Lakshin proclaims Tvardovsky's good intentions and loyalty to ideals:

> Tvardovsky did not regard his Party membership card as a meaningless scrap of cardboard. It was linked in his mind with a very genuine, honest —perhaps even hypertrophied—sense of duty. . . . The actual idea of communism as a happy state of democratic equality still ruled his mind and was an essential part of his personal ideal.

Perhaps Solzhenitsyn's treatment of Tvardovsky has been too harsh. On the other hand, it is now abundantly clear that Tvardovsky symbolizes the antithesis of Solzhenitsyn's literary and moral independence. God will judge, as Lakshin says, who is right and who is wrong. But Lakshin's tirade, which leads him finally to accuse Solzhenitsyn of "Stalinist" hatred, is no reliable source for what actually happened or for what it meant.

Mary Chaffin contributes a biographical essay on Tvardovsky which captures the tragic spectacle of a genuine reformer who was, nevertheless, a true believer in the October Revolution. Both Solzhenitsyn and Tvardovsky challenged the monolith of Soviet reality. Both were knocked down. "Tvardovsky's predicament was the more cruel since each defeat shook his faith in the system to the core while setbacks only confirmed Solzhenitsyn in the justice of his cause." The same Tvardovsky who as a nineteen-year-old Bolshevik had denounced his father as a *kulak,* who had risen to the top echelons of the Soviet literary establishment and was deposed, expressed hurt and bitterness over his father's exile in his last major poem, "By Right of Memory." Another poem which Tvardovsky was fond of reciting, probably one which he wrote himself, captured his despairing mood:

> It is as though our time's grown hollow;
> What filled it once has gone,
> And even what we hoped would follow
> Will never now be done.
> The body lives today, tomorrow;
> The soul from it is gone.

Linda Aldwinckle's essay on the politics of *Novy Mir* argues the merits of the attempt to reform the Soviet system from within. She shows that it was finally Tvardovsky's and Lakshin's faith in socialism which separated them from Solzhenitsyn. Still, she herself seems to share the belief in an ideal socialism not discredited by historical experiments. The story of the struggle to discover a humane Marxism is a pathetic testimony to why the true reformers who remain loyal to the system are inevitably destroyed by it.

Perhaps Solzhenitsyn's greatest achievement lies in the fact that, like the bearded Tolstoy, he embodies some essential of the Russian spirit, of the Russian understanding of the nature and destiny of man and the traditions of the Orthodox Church. He is a resister in the lineage of those 13th-century Russian believers who resisted the Mongols and never forgot that faith and love are deeper and more real than any other human value. □

Intelligently Liberal

Cord Meyer: *Facing Reality: From World Federalism to the CIA;* Harper & Row; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

Cord Meyer was a prominent American liberal leader of the late 1940's. This memoir-history records, with exceptional clarity, his odyssey from organizing the United World Federalists to some of the highest positions in the Central Intelligence Agency. It also gives a fine examination of the problems of the CIA and a view of the world situation through the eyes of an especially well-qualified and sagacious observer. Perhaps one of the most interesting revelations of the book is that, for Meyer, there is no inconsistency in his career. No big alteration has ever taken place in his moral outlook or personality —a fact that will doubtless be difficult for many of those who now wear the label "liberal" to accept. He has met,

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bravely and sensibly, a life of exceptional difficulty.

Cord Meyer lost his twin brother, and an eye, in the Pacific War. Not surprisingly, he was even more frantically concerned than most people about preventing another world war. Serving as an assistant to the United States delegation at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, he sensed much earlier than did most the futility of the United Nations. He became one of the leaders of the United World Federalists, a group aimed at forming a more effective world organization to keep the peace. Meyer's successful struggle with communist sympathizers within the United World Federalists, as well as his observation of the Soviets' aggression and obstruction, convinced him of the importance of the Soviet threat and the unlikelihood of Stalin's acceptance of the UWF program.

In 1951 Meyer joined the CIA, becoming involved in covert political-action programs. Surviving a devious smear campaign at the height of McCarthy's influence—Meyer emphasizes that Allen Dulles and the CIA stoutly defended their employees—he rose steadily. Meyer, it should be noted, regards Joe McCarthy's "lasting and significant legacy" not as any injury to American civil liberties but as a disorientation and confusion inflicted on the American intellectual community, giving many persons the impression that opposition to communism was equivalent to unjustified, paranoid hysteria. I think it would be more accurate to say that McCarthy provided many people, mostly of a later generation, a rather slim *excuse* to believe that. There is little reason to think McCarthy had that effect at the time.

During the 1950's, Meyer supervised covert efforts to counter Soviet political and propaganda efforts. He was responsible for our own propaganda efforts—Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and secret aid to anticommunist groups in Western Europe—mostly to the moderate left. In describing his duties, he offers, incidentally, a fine brief portrait of communist infiltration methods. He sardonically notes the misrepresentation of many of these efforts, and of the CIA's outlook, when they became publicly known in the late 1960's. The New Left and its fellow-travelers, and the sensation-seekers in the mass media, were successful in obscuring from the public, and perhaps even from themselves, the actual character of the CIA's secret political efforts. As Meyer notes, "It was important to them not to allow their preferred image of the Agency as a conspiratorial group of right-wing fanatics to become blurred by the intrusion of embarrassing evidence that many of its policies were enlightened and its leaders intelligently liberal." The CIA quickly became a favorite dart board of the unintelligently liberal.

"... self-important and often boring."

—*New York Times Book Review*

Meyer ultimately became Assistant Deputy Director for Plans. The Deputy Director for Plans actually ran the CIA's "clandestine service," its secret intelligence, counterintelligence and covert-action arm. He was in a good position to observe the Agency's decline and near downfall. One may not always agree with his loyal defense of the CIA, but he is quite successful in showing that a great majority of the charges made during the crusade against the CIA in the mid-70's were false or wildly exaggerated. In particular, the Agency's record of adherence to the law and obedience to Presidential authority was far better than most people think. As he notes, the reporting of the period was exceptionally biased and poor. For example, the CIA's mail-opening operation, which from 1953-1973 examined correspondence between American citizens and the Soviet Union, was not at that time illegal. But the Justice Department's finding of this received far less publicity than the ringing public denunciations of invasions of civil liberties. As Meyer notes coolly, the mail-opening operation was actually of little value. (There is a school of thought that tends to defend the CIA's most dubious and underhanded activities as particularly essential; Meyer seems to give little comfort to this group.) He also regards with ill-concealed distaste those like William Colby who, in his view, fumbled the ball when the CIA came under fire, and those who deliberately betrayed their trust, like Philip Agee. Meyer is highly critical of the abortive assassination plots, which he maintains he knew nothing about. He bluntly dismisses assassination as beyond the pale morally; the use of the Mafia against Castro he rightly observes was "monumental folly." Actually, it does not seem to me that assassination, as morally repugnant as it is, can be dismissed quite so summarily; it is at least conceivable that an occasion might arise where the assassination of a dictator might be absolutely necessary. Meyer does not mention, however, the CIA's drug experiments on uninformed subjects, which would seem to be the most reprehensible actions committed by the Agency. Strangely, this issue hasn't interested the CIA's enemies all that much either; a good many of them seem to be more offended by plans to kill foreign tyrants than by the victimization of innocent American citizens.

Particularly interesting sections of the book are Meyer's accounts of CIA's operation in Chile and the Angolan war. In discussing Chile, Meyer provides a quite convincing defense of the *basic policy* of the CIA's covert political activities. This was begun by the Kennedy administration in 1962, and not as a sinister conspiracy against Chilean democracy. Rather the CIA, countering Soviet subsidies to Allende's coalition, supported the reform-minded Christian Democratic Party against

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both the left and the right. Only briefly, in 1970, as a result of an "hysterical" decision by Nixon (whose attention to the Chilean problem was erratic) did the CIA ever become involved in a plot to overthrow the Chilean government. Meyer's account is similar to those written by such Chile experts as Paul Sigmund and Robert J. Alexander, albeit more favorable to the Agency.

Since the Iranian revolution, many people have had second thoughts about the value and morality of covert action. It is therefore important to note Meyer's emphasis on the use and *limitations* of covert action. "Covert political action should not be viewed as a last-minute quick fix or as a desperate alternative to sending in the U.S. Marines. Its effectiveness depends upon a correct analysis of the complex political forces at work in a foreign country. It can succeed only if it is consistently pursued over a period of time, as it was by Kennedy and Johnson in Chile, and is justified only by the extent of the threat posed by the Soviet's covert intervention on the side of their Communist allies." Meyer insists that until the Hughes-Ryan amendment is repealed, covert action will not again be a viable option. He also warns: "So long as the Soviets remain committed to continuing massive intervention, the policy of nonintervention in the internal affairs of other countries is a declaration of unilateral political disarmament by the United States."

Meyer's account of external intervention in the Angolan war is perhaps the best brief account yet available. In passing, he penetratingly analyzes the folly of the Kissinger, Nixon and Ford foreign policies as revealed by the Angolan affair. In dealing with Angola "the appearance of détente was maintained, while we attempted to compete in a covert rivalry in which the Soviets held the high cards because of the pervasive secrecy of their system and the vulnerability to exposure of the CIA covert capability." In fact covert action was asked to do the impossible. The Soviets' overt, if indirect, intervention with Cuban puppet forces simply swamped anything that the CIA could secretly do against them.

Meyer is not too optimistic about the future in Africa, where the Soviets have moved skillfully and decisively, making the most of even initially unfavorable situations. "By the time I left the government and retired from the Agency at the end of 1977, the Soviets seemed to me to be well on the way to positioning themselves for the final assault on their major geopolitical African objective, South Africa itself." The South Africans must be pressed to make a settlement with their black majority subjects; should they fail to do this, Meyer does not seem to think we can do much. A position almost as favorable has been created in Yemen and the Horn of Africa, which, with Soviet activities to the north, has put the Middle East in the jaws of a wide pincer.

The last third of the book skillfully presents the facts of our present predicament and Meyer's experienced view of the situation, making *Facing Reality* a worthy companion to Norman Podhoretz's excellent book, *The Present Danger.* Meyer notes that since the early 70's, even the gloomiest prognoses of the Soviet arms build-up have been consistently overoptimistic; the Soviets definitely aim at achieving a superior war-fighting ability for the purpose of political blackmail, Meyer believes, rather than of premeditated attack. America needs a new foreign-policy consensus and a sensible overall policy. Meyer is basically proud of the CIA's record, perhaps overproud, but, he warns, "even the best intelligence on the intentions and capabilities of other nations cannot rescue a basically misconceived and incoherent strategy from failure . . ." □

The Beautiful Person of Pleistocene

Jean M. Auel: *The Clan of the Cave Bear;* Crown Publishers; New York.

by Robert B. Eckhardt

In a recent essay in the *Wall Street Journal,* "The Conservative Ideas in Reagan's Victory," Leopold Tyrmand outlined the two dominant brands of contemporary conservatism: *libertarian,* which emphasizes the pre-eminent priority of freedom (with boundaries being set by the juxtaposed claims of other free individuals, in a manner which appears analogous to the way in which territories are staked out by many free-living animals); and *social-ethical,* in which freedom is also valued, but as one good among others such as religion, reason and tradition (to parallel the previous analogy, with fences set to keep Abel's sheep from consuming Cain's corn). Although I consider myself a traditionalist in many matters, I nevertheless suspect that many who belong to the social-ethical camp will find my way of making a living—studying and teaching evolutionary biology—sufficient basis for relegating me to the libertarian realm, if not to a deeper circle of hell. The point, though, is that there are some things even worse than believing in human evolution: for example, the widely accepted alternative of believing whatever is currently "in," which is to say, believing in nothing at all. To those afflicted with this curse the facts of history (or prehistory) have no bearing at all on whatever ideological issue has caught the fancy of the mob. One of the major faults of this book, for example, is that although it is ostensibly set in Eurasia about 35,000 years ago, during the Upper Paleolithic

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Era, its main issues seem to be rather astonishingly like those of 20th-century America. To see why this is so incongruous it is necessary to know something of the novel's setting.

The Clan of the Cave Bear is an attempt to reconstruct what might have transpired when some of the earliest modern people came in contact with the last survivors of an earlier group of humans. To follow a familiar parallel with another form of entertainment, before getting on to the details of the game, let's first identify the teams, then introduce the key players.

The earliest modern people are referred to in Auel's novel as Cro-Magnons [*sic;* to be linguistically correct the term is Crô-Magnon] after the site in the Dordogne Valley of France where in 1868 the first fossilized skeletons bearing skulls with small faces tucked beneath high-domed skulls were discovered in a geological context of undisputably high antiquity. This discovery confirmed a time depth extending back tens of thousands of years for people who looked like us, a conclusion which had been hinted at by a whole series of preceding but less-conclusive finds dating back to at least 1823. By the time that Victorians had been forced to accept the idea that at one time even Englishmen and Frenchmen had lived as bead-bedecked backwoodsmen, an idea even more disturbing to some had to be faced: evidence from nearby Germany indicated these early ancestors of ours had inherited the earth from more primitive humans, Neanderthals.

Until the middle of the 19th century, *Neanderthal* was simply another place name, referring to a small valley near Düsseldorf, Germany that had been a favorite place for the contemplative amblings of a locally revered 17th-century composer of hymns, Joachim Neumann (who, after the style of many scholars of that time, had Latinized his name by simple transliteration to Neander). In 1856 workers clearing out a cave in the valley came across a human skeleton. When first found this was probably very nearly complete, but the workmen discarded all save a few of the larger bones and the skullcap. By quick action a local schoolmaster named Fuhlrott was able to save these from reburial in the local cemetery. He sent the fossils instead to Professor Schaafhausen in Bonn, who published a monograph describing them in 1858.

By this tenuous series of accidents the fossil remains of Neanderthals came to be the first premodern form of humans that was discovered. Moreover, it is of considerable significance for present views about them that these more ancient humans were unearthed before publication of Charles Darwin's two epoch-making books on evolution: *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). In the absence of an accepted intellectual framework which could encompass our more ancient and different predecessors, the first Neanderthal—with his massive face, beetling brows, sloping forehead, low-domed skull and generally robust skeleton—was easy to dismiss as a freak. In the spirit of his time, one Dr. Gibb opined that the subject had been afflicted with "hypertrophic deformation," a bit of pseudomedical jargon for a condition never identified before or since. Even Rudolph Virchow, the most eminent German pathologist of his day, published a detailed list of the Neanderthal specimen's supposed pathologies.

These misdiagnoses are curious and disturbing; more curious still is the inescapable fact that now, even after dozens more Neanderthals are known—from Europe, the Near East and elsewhere—so that every part of the skeleton is represented many times over, there still persists the idea that Neanderthals were egregious and not a little grotesque. That is, faced with abundant proof that the first Neanderthal found was not a *unique* oddity, instead of accepting its like as potential ancestors, most of Western culture has come to consider the entire Neanderthal population as a collective embarrassment. Unfortunately, Auel's work does little, if anything, to alter this curious and unfortunate state of affairs. As noted earlier, it does little to help us understand our predecessors. Instead, the treatment here has taken the record of a people who survived for over 3500 generations, or several times as long as our republic has endured, and presented it as if their demise were inherent from the beginning. This is as nonsensical as the retrospective pronouncements on the other "inevitabilities" of later history. There is, quite simply, no objective evidence to indicate that we should view the Neanderthals as having been foredoomed.

Towards the likes of the Neanderthals our attitude should be compounded instead of admiration (the average size of their brains evidently exceeded ours), respect (they buried their dead, with ceremony and sometimes with flowers), awe (Neanderthals flourished in Western Europe at the height of the Pleistocene glaciation with a material culture no more advanced than today's relict

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hunters and gatherers) and mystery (there is still not complete agreement even among experts about their evolutionary fate, whether they became extinct or were gradually transformed by genetic changes into the modern forms who succeeded them). Although some of the facts noted here are used in the setting provided by Auel, they are rarely used persuasively. The net result is very much as if the Unicorn Tapestry in the Cloisters were used as a background for the acrylic day-glo dabblings of a grafitti artist; while the overlay adds physically, it detracts aesthetically.

"... solid book."

—*New York Times Book Review*

"These are real people in every sense ..."

—*Newsday*

The feeling throughout the book is reminiscent of a soap opera, the Upper Paleolithic version of *Serial.* The plot outline is universal and straightforward. A young child, Ayla, orphaned by a natural disaster, is picked up by a band of strangers. Loved by some though rejected by most because she is "different," she grows up self-reliant and strong-willed. In late adolescence and early womanhood conformity is forced on her, particularly by the reckless heir-apparent, who "works his will on her" chiefly to gratify his own ego by humiliating and dominating her. In response our heroine becomes outwardly submissive (also slightly pregnant), but channels her energy into the development of a skill which ultimately proves to be life-saving. However, instead of gratitude for her demonstration of selflessness she garners hatred from her master and is ultimately driven away from the community, adopted family and even her own child.

Of course, any plot outline can be made to sound silly; try composing or reading one of *The Old Man and the Sea* or even *Hamlet.* But the real test of a writer is how the outline is elaborated and brought alive; here it is readily evident that Hemingway and Shakespeare have no serious rival in Auel. Some of my dissatisfaction on this score arises from language that is simply incongruous, as in a description of Ayla's image of a snowfall.

> Ayla exclaimed with delight when she stepped out of her cave in the morning. A pristine whiteness softened the contours of the familiar landscape creating a magical dreamland of fantastic shapes and mythical plants. Bushes had top hats of soft snow, conifers were dressed in new gowns of white finery, and bare exposed limbs were clothed in shining coats that outlined each twig against the deep blue sky.

None of the garments mentioned in the simile had yet been invented, or would be for about 30,000 years. Even Leonardo Da Vinci would envy such prescience.

The substitution of current mental images for the very different ones that must have existed in the mind of the character portrayed is bothersome, particularly since it is not just one minor error. This problem permeates the book, extending to far more substantive descriptions of behavior and cognition, as can be seen in the following:

> Mog-ur had put a ban on men and women sleeping together until a new cave was found so the men could concentrate their energies on the rituals ... It didn't matter to Iza; her mate had been one of those killed in the cave-in. She had mourned him with proper grief at his burial ... but she was not unhappy he was gone. It was no secret that he had been cruel and demanding. There had never been any warmth between them ... She only hoped she could still cook for Creb [her brother]. He had shared her fire from the beginning. Iza sensed he hadn't liked her mate any more than she had, though he never interfered with the internal problems of her relationship.

This is Gothic soap: it is shoddy, not merely because it has the one-dimensionality of soap opera, but also because it negates the power of literature and history to take us beyond our own time and place so that we can contemplate the varieties of human thought and behavior in an attempt to distill what is enduring and significant. In place of this Auel's work suggests that the only universals which transcend time are the trivialities of daily existence.

The Neanderthals portrayed by Auel are at best noble savages and sometimes not very noble at that. They are destined for the human scrap heap. With them will go, conveniently, any links to a more primitive past, any biological traces of an ancient heritage that would not be forward-looking or malleable in the hands of social planners to come. In their place we have the Ayla, "lean ... slender, except for her milk-filled breasts, ... her thick blonde hair ... picked up highlights ... and gleamed golden ... taller, by far, than the tallest man of the clan." I recognize her. She is the first of the beautiful people, the one whose loins will beget the jet set.

I for one am sorry to see the Neanderthals go, though for substantive reasons beyond a personal dislike for Ayla. The idea of Neanderthal extinction furthered by Auel is an example of real philosophical poverty; if Neanderthals had not been discovered by scientists delving into our past, their like would have had to be invented in order to bridge the gap between ourselves and the yet-earlier and less modern populations now so abundantly documented. The only clear alternative to this is a separate creation set in 4004 B.C., with such other components required by a literal interpretation of the Bible as Eve

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being fashioned from Adam's rib, Methuselah living for nine hundred sixty-nine years, and so on. This latter alternative is not required even for those who are religious in the conventional sense; witness, for example, the intelligently written entry on evolution in the *Catholic Encyclopedia.* With Neanderthals neither on the theological blacklist nor implausible as a link to still earlier ancestors, on what grounds does Auel relegate them to extinction? One easy answer is that the idea is no responsibility of hers; she is merely reflecting what seems to be a majority viewpoint among professional anthropologists who share the general cultural stereotype of Neanderthals as part of a past we have moved beyond (indeed, they are the primary source of that viewpoint).

The Clan of the Cave Bear is subtitled "a novel," perhaps in the hope that it will be spared such embarrassing questions about accuracy and verisimilitude as long as it tells a lively story. Yet this is not the whole story. Many of the details in Auel's novel are based on *Shanidar,* written by the anthropologist Ralph Solecki, who directed the work at that important site and has written insightfully about it. Auel acknowledges her debt to Solecki at the beginning of her book; indeed, he is the only anthropologist or archeologist whom she mentions by name. To quote Solecki on Neanderthal, however, "according to all of the proofs that can be mustered, he is still our ancestor."

Perhaps Auel chose to treat Neanderthals as evolutionary relics, soon to die out in competition with the newly arrived modern humans, for literary rather than scientific reasons. It would be difficult, after all, to write a novel about extremely gradual evolutionary transformations over tens of thousands of years. The cast of characters and structural complexity required would make even Russian novels seem like *Classic* comic books. I suspect, though, that the choice was aided by the messages which are so obviously telegraphed again and again: cross a "modern" woman and you're doomed; straight legs good, curved legs bad; you can't make progress without breaking egg-shaped heads. □

A Reluctant Return

Graham Greene: *Ways of Escape: An Autobiography;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Robert C. Steensma

"To go back far in time is always a reluctant return (as one approaches death one lives a step ahead, perhaps in a hurry to be gone)," Graham Greene writes in *Ways of Escape,* the second part of a rather discursive autobiography begun in *A Sort of Life* (1971).

Greene has now been publishing novels for over half a century (his first was *The Man Within,* 1929; his most recent, *Doctor Fischer of Geneva or The Bomb Party,* 1980), and his reputation as one of the finest contemporary novelists seems secure. As a writer of novels, short stories, essays, plays, a few poems (which he prefers to forget), film criticism and movie scripts, he has produced a body of distinguished writing which continues to attract a large and appreciative audience. Several of his novels—*Brighton Rock* (1938), *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The End of the Affair* (1951) and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961)—have achieved the status of minor classics, and the critical jury is still out on several later ones.

Ways of Escape takes up where *A Sort of Life* left off, with Greene at age 27 and having just published his first success, *Stamboul Train* (1932; American title, *Orient Express).* Greene looks back over the succeeding 48 years in nine chapters and an epilogue, some of the material having been adapted from introductions to volumes in the collected edition of his works and from various pieces in periodicals.

This material includes descriptions of his journalistic trips to Malaya, Indochina, Kenya and communist Poland; selections from journals kept at various important points in his career; gentle and fond portraits of close friends such as Carol Reed and Evelyn Waugh; and shrewd comments on the art of the novel, with occasional remarks on his own work. His account—for the most part objective and serene—is occasionally spiced with amusing anecdotes on his troubles with American immigration authorities and with "The Other," a man passing himself off as Graham Greene in several parts of the world. And once in a while his political innocence appears when he treats bully-boys such as Allende, Castro, Torrijos, and Ho Chi Minh as men of integrity.

For the biographer there is little in this book that sheds any new light on Greene and his work. But appearing as it does in his 77th year (he was born in 1904) and at a time when he has again been passed over for a richly deserved Nobel Prize (very possibly because he isn't noticeably and stridently anti-American), *Ways of Escape* provides a kind of perspective from which to view his achievement. As he says in *A Sort of Life,* his reason for "recording these scraps of the past . . . is much the same motive that has made me a novelist: a desire to reduce a chaos of experience to some sort of order, and a hungry curiosity."

Throughout his career as a novelist (23 books so far), Greene has proven himself a perceptive and unsettling observer of the human comedy and an acerb commentator on the quality of modern life. As the contemporary novel slips deeper into moral irrelevance and technical eccentricity, Greene's char-

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acters, plots and themes have incisively diagnosed the 20th-century spiritual malaise and its symptoms: crime, totalitarianism, revolution, corruption. His fiction describes a world that wants to believe that God is dead and tries to function without aspirations or values, all the while complaining about the unfairness of it all. Most of his characters are caught in a cosmic tragedy they are too spiritually blind to understand, and like Milton's Satan they want to be God but find themselves living, like the archfiend, in:

> Regions of sorrow, doleful shades,
> where peace
> And rest can never dwell,
> hope never comes
> That comes to all, but torture
> without end
> Still urges.

Each shares the belief of Marlowe's Mephistopheles that this world "is hell, nor am I out of it."

Critics have often had a hard time sorting out Greene's vision of the world, in part because they tend to be unsympathetic to any writer who deals with religious themes and in part because Greene does not employ any kind of ambiguity which permits them to demonstrate their ingenuity. Consequently they have spent a great deal of time trying to prove him a "Catholic writer," a Jansenist, a Quietist, an Augustinian, a Pelagian or an existentialist. As Greene remarks, "Writing a novel is a little like putting a message into a bottle and flinging it into the sea—unexpected friends or enemies retrieve it." But A.A. DeVitis has perhaps most accurately described Greene as a writer who concerns himself "with the capacity of the human heart for sacrifice and greatness within a world governed by a God who seems unreasonable, hostile, and oftentimes indifferent; . . . with the all-pervasive nature of grace, the incontestable mystery of good and evil, and the inability of man to distinguish between the two."

No matter where his characters turn, they are unable to find any kind of meaning; they struggle toward some kind of redemption in a world in which, as Greene says, "goodness wilts into philanthropy, kindness, and those strange vague sicknesses into which Dickens's young women so frequently fall." And yet, as he remarks elsewhere, "I write about situations that are common, universal might be more correct, in which my characters are involved and from which only faith can redeem them, though often the actual manner of the redemption is not immediately clear. They sin, but there is no limit to God's mercy." They are not, he says, "my creation but God's. They have an eternal destiny. They are not merely playing a part for the reader's amusement. They are souls whom Christ tried to save."

A census of Greene's fictional people would provide a dismaying spectrum of modern humanity. All the way from Andrews, the smuggler of his first novel, down through the misfits and malcontents of his middle books, to Alfred Jones, the muddling widower of his latest story, the inhabitants of what one critic has called "Greeneland" (Greene hates the term) move through a world filled with violence, betrayal and disillusionment. The adolescent killer Pinkie Brown *(Brighton Rock),* the pitiful and pitying Scobie *(The Heart of the Matter),* the anguished novelist Bendrix *(The End of the Affair)* are all symptomatic of modern culture, for they struggle through the dead seas of agnosticism and impotent liberalism, having lost their spiritual anchors or having slipped their religious moorings, unable any longer to find any star by which to bring themselves to a haven. Instead they find only death—often by suicide or violence—or even deeper disillusionment. Only occasionally does one, like the whiskey priest of *The Power and the Glory* or Sarah Bendrix in *The End of the Affair,* achieve any kind of redemption, and then only after a descent into the *de profundis.* Their sainthood, like that of Paul and Augustine, comes only after they have rejected that which ironically and eventually saves them.

Greene's vision of the modern world, then, is one which portrays humanity as a victim of its own impulses toward evil and its rejection of religion and tradition for the false gods who have in turn betrayed them. And so with Browning's Bishop Blougram men find that:

> All we have gained then by our
> unbelief
> Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
> For one of faith diversified by doubt:
> We call the chessboard white,—we
> call it black.

In the end Greene seems to suggest that all mankind has to hold on to is faith—and love. Even so, all too often the misery of the world and the desperation of the human situation are overwhelming.

Ways of Escape is a melancholy book, for Greene believes that "the longer life goes on, the more surely one finds that old memories will be

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painful and hung around with associations, like the cobwebs in a room whose occupant left many years ago." His fiction derives from his experience; he speaks of a restlessness "which has never been quite allayed: a desire to be a spectator of history, history in which I found I was concerned myself."

Greene's vision of a corrupted humanity will never comfort the romancers and sentimentalists who dominate modern fiction, criticism and education, nor will his technical mastery satisfy the jaded tastes of a critical establishment deeply infatuated with eccentric style and philosophical banality. But if Greene as a historian sees the 20th century as an age without faith and permeated by the cheap, the violent, the corrupt—if indeed it is "Greeneland"—he will only reply, perhaps wearily, "Greeneland perhaps; I can only say it is the land in which I have passed much of my life." □

The Costs of Survival

Jack Eisner: *The Survivor;* William Morrow & Co.; New York.

by Will Morrisey

"Learn to be silent"—so Elie Wiesel advises those who would speak of the Holocaust. Especially those who were not there:

> In intellectual, or pseudo-intellectual circles, in New York and elsewhere too, no cocktail party can really be called a success unless Auschwitz, sooner or later figures in the discussion. Excellent remedy for boredom. . . .*

The Jews, he observes, died because they had no friends, and even friends should not judge one another until shared circumstance teaches them understanding. Savants' chatter camouflages their secret indifference along with their ignorance.

Wiesel knows that "the only ones who were, who still are, fully conscious of their share of responsibility for the dead are those who were saved." Here, responsibility means guilt—not the unreasoning guilt of one tormented by his own survival, but the all-too-reasonable guilt of one who remembers the terms of survival. The nazis' death quota, that engine of *arbitrary* selection, seems a triumph of collectivism, a perfect expression of indifference to the individuality of the victims. But the quota forced another excruciating individuality upon the survivors:

> . . . the one who had been spared, above all during the selections, could not repress his first spontaneous reflex of joy. A moment, a week, or an eternity later, this joy weighted with fear and anxiety will turn into guilt. *I am happy to have escaped death* becomes equivalent to admitting: *I am glad that someone else went in my place.*

Some of those who admitted this tried to forget the dead. Others joined them in death. Still others initiated a silent monologue, continued to this day, "which only the dead deserve to hear."

What is this monologue? Those of us who ask risk becoming cocktail-party cognoscenti, pretenders to understanding. Yet we should ask, I think; we may not deserve to hear the monologue, but if we do not hear *of* it, if we do not face the memories of the Holocaust, our silence will begin with tact and end with the cowardice tact may conceal.

Jack Eisner calls his memoir *The Survivor.* He knows the silent monologue of which Wiesel speaks. After the war he spent much time "with other survivors." "We understood one another's silences." Did they? Surely they understood each other's need for silence, but I doubt that all these monologues with the dead were alike. Both Wiesel and Eisner call themselves gravestones, markers commemorating the dead. But they are different men with different things to say to us—whatever they say to the dead.

Guilt enters Eisner's monologue to us, like Wiesel's. Not *as* Wiesel's.

> I am one in a thousand who survived. Why me? Was I better than the half million Jews in Warsaw who did not?

Eisner tells us how he survived. Although in this passage he means to deny his superiority to the dead, his memoir shows us in what ways he was "better" than many of those who died, why he was a better survivor. Acts concern him more than thoughts. Wiesel, who cares much for thoughts and less for action, tortures himself with the question, "Why did you not resist?" Eisner did resist, did act, at times with a prudence that Wiesel might find profoundly disconcerting. These two men could not say the same things to the dead any more than they can say the same things to us. Guilt touches them differently.

To Eisner, thought undirected toward acts weakens the thinker. "My father was a dreamer, a philosopher, a gentle man." "He believed in the goodness of humanity" and "had faith in a civilized Germany." "I loved and respected him, but sometimes I wished he were a more forceful man." The means by which 13-year-old Jack Eisner might have begun a life of the mind disintegrated by the grace of the nazis; in 1939 they destroyed the Warsaw Music Conservatory, which had awarded him a scholarship. After that, his thoughts served action and his acts served survival. Action, in this circumstance, required courage first of all. "I knew that

*Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time,* Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York 1968.

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my Christian friends didn't believe in Jewish valor. . . . But I also knew, in my heart, that they were wrong." Indeed they were. When the nazis tried to destroy the Warsaw ghetto in 1943, Eisner was there. They "entered the ghetto in their usual way, firing guns in the air and screaming for all Jews to come out of their buildings." Eisner adds proudly, "But we weren't the usual Jews." After repeated invasions failed, the nazis finally could "conquer" the ghetto only by leveling it with artillery fire.

Eisner himself is no "usual" man. His courage did not depend on comrades. At Budzyn, the second of four concentration camps he endured, he escaped alone, then faced punishment alone after his recapture. The commandant beat him with a whip; "he wanted me on the ground at his feet." Eisner refused to fall. Eventually, the commandant exhausted himself, but Eisner "straightened back to attention."

> I felt the world was crushing me. The sky was falling like a shattered mirror on my face. But I stood.

Survival, both as a Jew among Jews and as an individual, obsessed Eisner, but survival finally served not only the will to live, the desire for revenge and the need to bear witness to the struggle of those who died; it was a matter of dignity, of affirming the humanity the nazis—and all the anti-Semites of the day, malevolent or indifferent—tried to deny.

Yet survival, as Wiesel insists, can also cost dignity, expend what it tries to save. Eisner knows this. Courage needs thought to complement it, and thought that serves survival often recommends indignity. Eisner watched an SS officer whip his mother:

> I wanted to leap at the sadist's throat. But I didn't budge. Survival was what counted.

He watched a nazi commandant herd Jews into a synagogue, put a gasoline can on the porch, then explode the can with machine gun bullets:

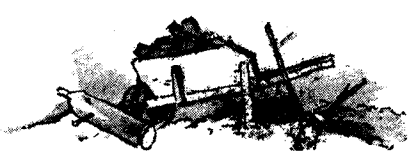
> Sick to my stomach, I watched the inferno from a distance. All my own fears, anguish, and self-pity vanished. I wanted to jump on [the commandant's] neck. To squeeze it. To wrench the last breath from his body. But my mind told me I was helpless. All I could do was turn my eyes to the forest.

In Flossenburg, his last concentration camp, Eisner became "friendly" with a German criminal who worked at the disinfection chambers. "I soon became part of the elite, an inmate with connections"—so much so that he achieved redesignation as "an Aryan Christian." Wiesel would devote many pages to such incidents, weighing the ethical problems they pose (in fact he did watch his father beaten, and writes extensively about it). Eisner, the survivor who acts, moves on.

Eisner has no immunity to guilt. Early in the war, after escaping the ghetto to live in "Aryan Warsaw," he returned; "my conscience bothered me." When a young friend was killed during a smuggling expedition, Eisner felt responsibility. Forced to carry starving inmates to the crematorium in Flossenburg, madness nearly claimed him:

> That night, I couldn't sleep at all. Those big brown eyes. Those big blue eyes. Those big wide-open green eyes. Millions of eyes stared at me all night long. I hated those eyes. . . . I hated the world.

Guilt, yes: disabling guilt, never. In his monologue with the dead—with *these* dead, the ones he carried—Eisner may accuse himself, but he can accuse the world with more vehemence, and more justification. In his book he restrains himself, except when he writes of the nazis.



This world, not quite rid of nazis, reads memoirs of the Holocaust, watches new holocausts in Mao's China and in Cambodia. Perhaps the world's continued ignorance, indifference and criminality goads Eisner not only to present Hell but also to explain it. (For example, he tells of a sign on Flossenburg's gate that said, "Work liberates," adding "The message was totally ironic." He does this sort of thing more than once.) At times he tells us more than we should know, as when he describes a couple of his early sexual adventures in prose worthy of *Penthouse.* There are pages that read all too much "like a novel"—or worse, a cheap and trivial screenplay. What he has lived needs no dramatization. Eisner, who writes with terse forcefulness at his best, should not be blamed for literary misjudgment; he runs an import-export business (the world of acts, as always), not a literary journal. Blame his editors.

Wiesel's more refined and powerful intellect takes us places Eisner cannot. Eisner's activeness also takes us places, giving us five memories for each Wiesel presents. Here is one that only Wiesel could elaborate upon properly: at one camp, a nazi general on a white horse stopped in front of the inmates. At his side, on a white pony, rode a 10-year-old Jewish boy dressed in a white uniform, black boots and carrying a small whip. The boy ordered his fellow Jews into the showers. Days later, he saved Eisner from execution, ordered him to be whipped, smiled, complimented his courage and handed him a chocolate bar. Shining like ebony, this brilliant evil mesmerizes as it repels. (If he survived, what would be this child's monologue with the dead?) If memoirs of the Holocaust teach us to learn the right silence, they also teach us to try to find the right speech and the right acts by showing us what happens if we fail. □

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Living Within Our Means

David Kennedy: *Over Here: The First World War and American Society;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Gordon M. Pradl

The existential dilemma characteristic of "modernism" is not so much the disruptive desire immediately to have it all, outwardly to experience all things simultaneously, gallivanting through yet-unimagined boundaries of cultural space; rather, it is the fact that, seemingly, everyone in our "advanced" society has finally reached this depressing pinnacle of desire. With the entire cultural/economic machinery insisting that it is our duty as patriotic citizens to stand by the pay-later credo, no wonder we daily feel compelled to grab blindly at the brass ring, yet all the while spinning deeper into an inarticulate discontent. Ironically, in such modern times human possibility is severely shackled, for the power of the future erodes proportionate to our need to swallow its rewards in the present.

The historian who will help us understand the perils of this "modern" dilemma will do so in part by locating its roots in the past. Any initial attempt at dealing with this problem requires that we gain a perspective on those times when not just individual Americans overstepped their consumptive limits, but when the nation as a whole first began the decline toward living beyond its means—which is another way of suggesting that we must find that time when American culture lost faith in tomorrow because it no longer would or could delay acting out its interests today.

David Kennedy's *Over Here* is such a history. He dissects that earlier time in American society from which the dilemmas of our current selfishness are directly descended: America's begrudging yet insistent participation in the Great War. Clearly our ills today go deeper than the series of unresolved decisions made by both government and private citizens between 1913 and 1920, but in understanding the contradictory responses of that prior age as enumerated by Professor Kennedy, we can take the first step toward a new commitment to restraint.

The crowning achievement of the Wilson Administration was not its victory in Europe, but rather its creation of "modernism," namely the ability to hide the true cost of things through some sleight of hand, either cultural or economic. On the economic front, much of the credit for the "innovative" financing of America's role in World War I belongs to Treasury Secretary William McAdoo. Everyone, of course, wanted the experience of the European campaign, yet not surprisingly, doors closed when the U.S. Treasury went asking citizens to pay their fair share. However, with his various schemes, especially his utilization of the newly formed autocratic Federal Reserve System to print and thus create new money, McAdoo "suggested a model for later administrations in waging unpopular wars [both foreign and domestic, in which] . . . the true incidence of war costs could be hidden, at least in the short run, by inflation." Here at last we had, at the highest levels, the federal government legitimizing the philosophy of getting something for nothing. The idea of a national banking-credit system seemed fine in principle as it would centralize and potentially stabilize the rather chaotic approach to banking in America, but in practice the unchecked employment of the Federal Reserve System's power allowed us all to spend too many of tomorrow's dollars today. Further, it even led us to expect this as a right, as increasingly we forgot our responsibility in actually having to earn those same dollars.

This whole "modern" economic scene is insightfully surveyed in *Over Here.* Besides analyzing the mixed blessing of the Federal Reserve System with its direct connection to the inflationary expansion of our money supply, Kennedy exposes the World War I roots of other economic nightmares including cost overrides in government contracts, the compromising intertwining of government and big business in which corporate executives came to expect regulative protection from the risks of free markets, and the government's loss of nerve in initiating legitimate public ventures when the private sector was either unwilling or unable to take advantage of new economic circumstances, such as the lost opportunity to underwrite an American Merchant Fleet and thus gain control of the world import-export business at the conclusion of World War I.

But perhaps the more disturbing legacy of Wilson's age had to do with the infrastructure of American life, both organizationally and conceptually. The guiding myth Americans lived by included a premium on the right of individual freedom, but with the imperatives of the war effort, this right came into direct conflict with the claims of national need. Thus in the not-unreasonable name of efficiency, personal

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liberty was sacrificed. But the real issue was initiative, not liberty. The "emergency" replacement of the "school district-county-state-federal" decision-making pyramid by the widening cobweb of federal agencies not only represented a real shift in power and authority, but it also came to mean that sources outside the immediate experience of the citizen began their gradual stranglehold on his life. America's view of Europe at this time allowed her participation in the Great War to be thought of in terms of a crusade to save the old world from its autocratic and coercive institutions, institutions in which power and initiative flowed from the top down—yet the transformation which Wilson unwittingly achieved meant the end of our own bottom-up organizational patterns and indeed the end of our very sense of self as masters of our own fates.

This kind of fundamental disintegration of the American social fabric that modernism embodies also found expression in a variety of cultural forces unleashed during Wilson's years as President. Propaganda and appeals to the baser emotions were hardly invented by Wilson, but still the present scope of media manipulation of the mass mind dates from this era. Indeed, it is from this period that "the benign appraisal of human nature succumbed to a more cynical assessment, and the idea of 'the people,' good and educable, gave way to a concept of 'the masses,' brutish and volatile." And we have come so far as to have lost this very distinction in our common speech. Thus we no longer separate *mass* nouns from *count* (or individual) nouns: "fewer people" has become "less people" and "the number of votes," "the amount of votes." (Compare for instance the incorrect forms—"fewer sugar" and "the number of sugar.")

The Wilsonian erosion of the floodgates of self-determination left the old American regime of the mind in shambles. The collective, public-opinioned, lib-culture lifestyle was just around the corner. From the intrusion of intelligence (IQ) testing to the introduction of sex education—"In its own blunt way, the Army contributed to the demythologizing of erotic life by bringing sexual matters into the arena of public discourse"—the sense of living within one's own boundaries vanished. And yet there was no cultural replacement of any substance. Even the writers of the war period, from Dos Possos's scorn of the older culture's literary tastes to Cummings's parody of the verbal conceits of the age's idealistic excesses, widened the gulf between art and audience, displacing mimesis with irony as the dominant form of understanding. In sum, Wilson's modernism had rekindled the need for self-expression while drying up those inner resources which had always made the genius of American self-expression possible.

In negotiating America's passage between individualistic and collective eras, Wilson and the other leaders of our government left us with such confusion and disenchantment because they refused to stand up to special interests. Instead, they allowed these interests to triumph over those of the individual and left a dangerous precedent that has been all too readily followed by subsequent generations of politicians. Out of this unresolved dilemna of whom our institutions serve has come the appeasement of lib culture and the end of voluntarism, for finally modernism attacks our ethical structures by promising us salvation through the future of technique, not the future of the person. Kennedy touches this problem directly:

> Americans, prizing the weakness of their ancient institutions, strove to maintain that holy debility in a time of crisis by substituting aroused passion for political authority. The war thus demonstrated the distasteful truth that voluntarism has its perils. Reliance on sentiment rather than strengthened sovereignty to mobilize a people for total war compounded the problem of requiring all people to do what but a few people wished. That kind of coercion, no less insidious for its indirection—perhaps doubly objectionable on that count—had deep roots in liberal democratic culture, and was to become a salient feature of twentieth-century American life.

Were we ever to reclaim the "right" of living within our means, a surprising reversal could occur: meaning within our lives. □

In the Mail

Compassion and Common Sense **by Carl E. Ockert; MCP Books; Germantown, Maryland.** A slender paperback volume which offers some novel solutions to problems such as unemployment, inflation, crime and education. Highly recommended.

Zoning: Its Costs and Relevance for the 1980's **by Michael Goldberg and Peter Horwood, edited by Walter Block; The Fraser Institute; Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.** An examination of zoning laws and practices, including a forthright challenge to the assumptions of zoning philosophy.

Better Government at Half the Price **by James T. Bennett and Manuel H. Johnson; Caroline House Publishers; Ottawa, Illinois.** A comparison of production costs between the public and private sectors and an examination of the reasons for the difference.

Myths that Rule America **by Herbert I. London and Albert L. Weeks; University Press of America; Washington, D.C.** A polemical study of some of the myths—absolute freedom, happiness, success, equality, etc.—that are prevalent in today's America, and a comment on the "functional use of myth."

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Real Romance and Bogus Theology

Judith Rossner: *Emmeline;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Becki Klute

Although God was pronounced dead somewhere in the 1960's, He has recently been making a rather remarkable comeback. Various concepts of God, or religion, are more and more in the public eye, and a phenomenon called the "religious right" is sometimes credited with having political influence. Churches of all denominations are reporting increased attendance, the "electronic pulpit" is beamed into more and more homes, a southern preacher is one of the biggest names in the news, and a few public schools are trying to allow children to pray in the classroom. A Christian could reasonably be expected to approve of the general direction of this trend, and most do, but the joy is not entirely unalloyed.

Within the Judeo-Christian concept of God is the acceptance of the existence of Satan. Lucifer, chief among the archangels, was not content to be "subordinate," and God had to cast him out. By definition, then, Satan must be extremely able, clever—not merely a mischievous little creature with horns and pitchfork—more intelligent, perhaps, than any but his maker. The Judeo-Christian tradition holds that God and Satan are engaged in a perpetual battle for men's eternal souls, a battle in which God may be more powerful, but Satan doesn't play by gentlemen's rules. One of his favorite tricks is to disguise what is evil and make it appear to be good, even godly. It is perhaps, best illustrated by one of Christ's parables:

> The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, 'Sir didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, 'An enemy hath done this.'
>
> —Matthew 13:24-28

When one learns that "tares" are weeds which look very much like wheat, Christ's explanation of the parable becomes quite clear:

> The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.
>
> —Matthew 13:38

This parable might then account for some of the notions, even doctrines, which only purport to be of God. Such ideas are often espoused by good, well-meaning people, but these pseudo-Christians always seem to be tailoring the word of God to fit human predilection instead of the other way around, making Christianity a little more comfortable—a better fit, as it were.

Judith Rossner seems to be one of the "tares." Christianity is too hard for her. She wants God to be gentler, nicer. Rather than a merciful God, able to forgive even the blackest sin, Ms. Rossner wishes He would redefine sin, lower the standards. The Lord's methods of communication don't quite suit Ms. Rossner either. She seems to think He should protect us from all unpleasantness every step of our way—with no effort whatsoever on our part. If He doesn't work quite that way, well then, according to Ms. Rossner, God just isn't enough. He wasn't enough for the lapsed Catholic Terry in *Looking for Mr. Goodbar.* Terry's problems were very complex, stemming from conditions beyond the control of man, and Rossner sent her to all the wrong places to look for answers. Terry occasionally glanced to the Church for solace, but when the priest (God's surrogate) didn't immediately set things right, any possibility of help from above was quickly dismissed, and she searched the Third Avenue bars ever more thoroughly.

Emmeline derives more comfort from God than Terry did. Trying to come to terms with the necessity of leaving home (at age 13) and going to work in a faraway mill, she remembers several portions of scripture. Then:

> She looked at the sky, feeling God's presence . . . and she felt for the first time that she would be able to go if they sent her . . . she would not be alone.

Emmeline's mother gives her the family Bible to take to Lowell, the mill town, but it doesn't ease the pain of separation; she can't read it because the coach shakes too much. Ms. Rossner distributes liberally clues about what she sees as God's inadequacy. Among the most obvious is when several girls are refused jobs or dismissed from the mill for reasons that are beyond their control. What Ms. Rossner thinks a mill corporation ought to do about a woman who had no one to care for her children, or a tubercular applicant, is left to speculation.

Emmeline feels very far away from God in Lowell; even going to church doesn't seem to help. She has the bad luck to go first to a cold, impersonal church; again this is somehow assumed to be God's fault. Rather than seek another church, Emmeline decides that "God couldn't see her in Lowell." The only other sources of guidance for Emmeline are implied to be inadequate: an older mill girl does not provide the instant closeness that Emmeline craves,

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and the rooming-house landlady is coarse and snoopy. Bereft, Emmeline turns to the only obvious, easy source of comfort—a supervisor in the mill.

At this point Ms. Rossner temporarily abandons her religious theme in favor of the tried-and-true combination of the country innocent and the dastardly rake. A pregnant, disgraced Emmeline is banished, and the implication is that the supervisor suffers only a little censure and embarrassment, thus providing a sop for any feminists who happen to pick up the book. Emmeline, living with her aunt, reluctantly gives up her baby without ever having seen it, but she fantasizes, even deludes herself into believing, that she gave birth to a daughter.

Emmeline finally returns home under the pretext of ill health, and her family is none the wiser. She wants desperately to unburden herself to her mother, but somehow cannot; she simply abandons the idea of confiding in the pastor of whom she once thought so highly. Her inability to share the single most important event in her life turns Emmeline into a silent woman, disillusioned and fending off would-be suitors as the years drift past. She simply watches, rather than lives, life in the rustic New England countryside until the arrival of a young railroad builder named Matthew Gurney.

While her father takes an instant dislike to Matthew, Emmeline feels an immediate fascination for him, and for the second time Ms. Rossner takes up a romantic theme. Emmeline eventually becomes Mrs. Gurney, and finally Ms. Rossner is ready to pull her two themes together. The deathwatch for Emmeline's mother brings Aunt Hannah, who is routinely introduced to Matthew and given the news of the recent marriage. As she—recognizing his surname and, horrified at the possibility—questions him closely, Emmeline quickly comprehends, then flees to attempt suicide by drowning. To her family's dismay, she survives, only to find that Matthew is gone and she is—forever-

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more—a pariah.

Ms. Rossner gives the reader good cause to despise the behavior of the God-fearing New Englanders as they try to force Emmeline to leave town. But she cannot, will not, and one wonders if it is a 19th-century version of the woman who was stoned, whom Christ forgave, saying, "Go, and sin no more." Indeed, Emmeline Mosher Gurney seems to become more saintly with each passing year, and, while the townspeople still won't speak to her, they do send food and firewood on occasion (one recalls the ancient abbesses and monks who depended on Christian charity for their ascetic survival). Just in case the reader has missed any of these allusions, the final paragraph spells out Ms. Rossner's oxymoronic beliefs:

> Feelings so powerful that they could have come only from God lead some to those acts most strongly condemned by his word.

Judith Rossner is a writer of some skill, and with *Emmeline* and *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* she has proved her ability to appeal to a mass audience. The romantic stories captivate the vast numbers of gothic and historical-romance fans, and the easy pacing holds the attention of the most superficial reader. The problem is not with those who recognize her theological implications, but with that mass audience who will swallow the Rossner concept of God without realizing it, and another blow will have been struck at traditional Christian beliefs.

In an introductory note, Ms. Rossner claims that the basic facts of the story are true: there really was an Emmeline Mosher and a Matthew Gurney, and so on. Thus she implies that since we can rely on her facts, we ought also to trust her theology—but I don't. □

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COMMENDABLES

Sentimental Journey

Jean-Luc Daval: *Avant-Garde Art 1914-1939;* Skira/ Rizzoli International; New York.

What comes to mind when reading the title of this imposing volume? Picasso or Le Corbusier? Matisse or Bauhaus? Cubism or expressionism? Surrealism or constructivism and ProletKult? Dada or more refined forms of abstraction?

A strange overcrowding of our visual consciousness makes an answer quite difficult. However, we at the *Chronicles of Culture* tend to be victims of a more confusing impression: to us the code word *avant-garde* has become so emaciated, devalued, stripped of significance, depreciated and reduced to the point of cultural grotesquerie that we can no longer use it in good faith. Only for a past occurrence does it have any meaning—which, of course, is a doleful paradox.

Mr. Daval, who is a dean at the Swiss *Ecole Superieure d'Art Viseul* in Geneva (and the editor of *Skira Annual*), tells the story best by way of the titles of some of his chapters: "The Crisis of Representation, 1914-1918," "Art for Life's Sake, 1925-1929," "Dreams of Deceits, 1937-1939." Let's qualify that: he tells the story only to a certain extent, for very little, if anything, is said about how avant-garde's infatuation with the ideological and political left turned many of its artistic achievements into a fool's errand and a fool's paradise, and made many 20th-century artists vulnerable, betrayed, even ridiculous quarries for an assortment of Lenins, Stalins and wealthy art connoisseurs with cynically tailored "social consciences." Avant - garde served radical causes slavishly, partly because of its intellectual *faiblesse,* and partly counting on the enlightened benignity of the dictatorship of the proletariat, once it began to create its new and better world. The rest was a nightmare that only the Russian avant-gardists who perished in Gulags know the truth about, wherever their souls now wander.

The volume is fabulously printed in Switzerland by Skira, the most famous of publishing houses that specialize in art reproduction. What makes Skira so superior is hard to discern, but we have a palpable feeling of unmatched excellence as our eyes move from Matisse's "Lady in Blue" on the jacket (the original is in Philadelphia's Museum of Art) through the entire display of color reproductions in this visually superb tome. □

Refreshing Simplicity

Edward Teller: *The Pursuit of Simplicity;* Pepperdine University Press; Malibu, California.

It has been said that the test of a great mind is whether its owner is able to communicate complexities in a fashion simple enough to be understood by others. This is exactly what Dr. Teller has done in *The Pursuit of Simplicity.*

In the five chapters that make up this slim volume, originally presented as a lecture series at Pepperdine University, Dr. Teller explains various facets of scientific theory from Ptolemy to Einstein, and somehow it all emerges in a form which is both interesting and understandable. Every schoolboy knows about Newton and the apple, Galileo and his "heresy," but few are aware of many of the diverse factors which affected their work. Dr. Teller even lets us know about the mistakes, the *erroneous* conclusions of men like Pythagoras and Copernicus.

It is evident that Dr. Teller's understanding reaches well beyond the laboratory, that he is hardly the "mad bomb-builder" that liberal cultural historians have made him out to be. His thoughtful analysis is a refreshing change from the smoldering rhetoric of the antinuke rabble-rousers. (BK) □

Remembering Truman

Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry Truman; Edited by Robert H. Ferrell; Harper & Row; New York.

The publication of President Truman's diary is a welcome, if not a dramatic, addition to our knowledge of the 40's and 50's. There are no really stunning revelations, though a few high-flying theories, mostly constructed by Truman's enemies, will suffer well-deserved crashes. This is a collection of scattered notes rather than a day-to-day record, and some years of Mr. Truman's Presidency have only a few entries. But the diary shows something of the President's thoughts and opinions. Some of the things Truman confided to his diary and the letters he wrote to blow off steam—but never sent—might have caused a sensation at that time. Basically, however, Harry Truman was the kind of man the American people thought he was.

There are some interesting things, and confirmation for the opinions of some earlier historians. Truman's diary makes clear, for example, that he was quite slow to become alarmed about the Soviets in 1945, but that he did hope that the A-bomb would cause Japan to surrender before the Soviets invaded Manchuria. But the elaborate conspiratorial theories concocted about the bomb are also refuted. So is the claim, made by liberals who blamed the President for the failure to pass Fair Deal legislation, that Truman was not really a liberal. Though Truman disliked what he called "professional liberals," his liberalism was quite genuine. His support for civil rights was not a ploy, and he disliked the conservative and Southern wing of his party. He seems to have viewed all the Southern Democratic leaders, except for Senator Richard Russell, with contempt.

It is interesting to note that Truman's distaste for MacArthur seems to have gone back as far as 1945, but the President had at least some inclination toward carrying out MacArthur's program in Korea in 1951-1952. If there are still people who think that Truman was soft on communism, let them read this book. Truman came to hate the Soviets deeply and bitterly, though in the perspective of a quarter of a century it is clear that he overrated his success in dealing with them.

Harry Truman may not have been one of our greatest Presidents, but this book shows why people rightly remember him with a respect that most of our

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recent Presidents do not receive. After flying over Nevada in 1955, he grumbled that it was a "great gambling and marriage destruction hell," and that it should never have become a state, as it was a "hell-hole of iniquity." He would probably have been a great hero of common sense in our day. (AJL) □

IN FOCUS

Economics of Elitist Fine-Tuning

Ronald E. Müller: ***Revitalizing America: Politics for Prosperity;*** Simon & Schuster; New York.

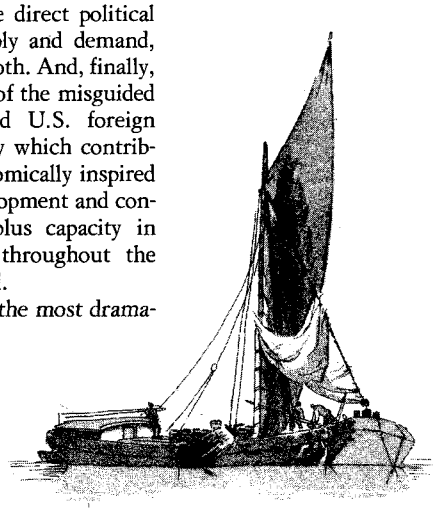
by Michael W. Hodin

In 1974, Richard Barnett and Ronald Müller wrote a book called *Global Reach,* in which they meant to describe the basic immorality of the American corporate system as it stretched around the world raping environments, exploiting people and extending its own power. More recently these arguments have fallen on hard times as a result of overwhelming evidence that the most prosperous and freest countries of the developing world are those which have associated themselves with the United States. It turns out that the U.S.-based multinational corporations are not nearly as powerful as the rhetoric of *Global Reach* and the speeches of Third World leaders have tried to suggest. Nor, by the way, are they as evil as depicted. Companies that appear large in the aggregate wield precious little influence in individual countries around the globe, where they operate at the whims of Third World governments. Moreover, the benefits to the United States from its companies' foreign investments offer a bright spot in an otherwise-gloomy international trade picture.

With the publication of *Revitalizing America: Politics for Prosperity,* Ronald Müller now directs his attention to issues which are in the mainstream of America's economic-policy debate: How can we reverse the trend toward decline in productivity, high rates of unemployment and inflation, loss of competitiveness in international markets, etc., etc., etc.? Like Barnett's *Lean Years,* Müller's approach to solving America's economic problems is not at all in the mainstream of the policy debate. Indeed, he draws heavily on development economics applied in Third World countries, an approach based on the premise that we are operating in what he calls a "post-market economy," which clearly places Mr. Müller on the left perimeter of the debate which sees the free market as unworkable and capitalism as, at best, undesirable. The market system is outdated and new programs and policies are required to conform to his vision of the "post-market economy," one where the "machinery for making economic policy and decisions" would be based on something other than the market. This, according to Müller, is because "the economic machinery that was supposed to produce prosperity has stalled." What he cannot bring himself to admit, however (if he understands it at all), is that the "stall in prosperity" has been wrought not by a "post-market economy" but by antimarket approaches. It is Müller's guarded endorsement of "supply-side economics," however, which can be deceiving, and of which one has to be especially wary. For his approach, however disguised by semantics, is to continue to play with the market—fine-tuning, as it were. And this political control, even if it is mixed into the rhetoric of supply-side economics, even if it is implemented by Müller's task forces or quasi-government agencies, is still statism, which will lead to restrictions on individual freedom and liberties.

Müller's brand of "national planning" is the alleged solution to the problems of "market imperfections," which, he argues, have led to the continuing condition of stagflation. His basic flaw, of course, is that these "market imperfections" were caused by what can only be described as antimarket forces—of which he ultimately wants more. For example, institutionalized regulation in this country and abroad—the multinationals are to be used as vehicles to lead a U.S. effort at "global harmonization of . . . social, environmental, health and safety, and other regulation . . ." There is also to be more direct political control of supply and demand, "fine-tuning" both. And, finally, a continuation of the misguided and misdirected U.S. foreign economic policy which contributes to uneconomically inspired industrial development and conditions of surplus capacity in major sectors throughout the industrial world.

But perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the adverse effects political control of the market can have is OPEC. Here is a case in which the market system was abandoned, thus it is the ultimate success story for the brand of development economics which Müller wants to apply with a vengeance. Indeed, he spends more than a chapter on what is touted as a new Marshall Plan which, through the World Bank or some such institution, will redistribute OPEC's billions to developing economies that currently suffer most from the cartel's control of the market. True, the international economy and many national economies are overburdened by OPEC's effects: market domination among the OECD countries, seemingly unending debt in the developing countries, and distortions of the market which lead to high rates of stagflation and conditions of instability. It would seem, however, that the solution one would *not* want would be a political arrangement among OPEC, the industrial world and the non-OPEC developing world that would further institutionalize and legitimize OPEC's intervention in the market and its control of the West's oil supply. More market interference is precisely what we do not need.



Dr. Hodin is a public affairs associate for Pfizer, Inc.

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Nor has Müller fundamentally parted company with the proponents of a New International Economic Order to which his and Barnett's *Global Reach* provided enormous comfort. His new-found use for the multinationals—he says they have proved to be adaptive and can be used to achieve social and political goals—is not based on what real economic value they may offer for the healthy functioning of our economic and political system. Rather it is as if Müller congratulates corporate America on its compromises, regarding such U.N. triumphs as guidelines for "technology transfer" or "codes of conduct," and he calls on corporations in the name of social responsibility to reconstruct themselves to include as members of their boards "all stakeholders in society"—consumerists, minorities, labor, environmentalists and the like. Nowhere does he acknowledge that by such compromises the corporation is less able to do what it does best: produce wealth, create employment and lead economic growth in America and abroad. □

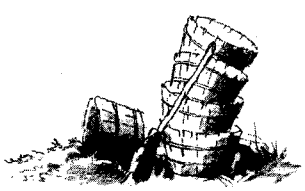
What to Make of a Diminished Thing

Max Frisch: ***Man in the Holocene;*** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

The setting of Max Frisch's new novel is his native Switzerland, probably his native canton. At least he gives it the same name, Ticino, that he gives as that of his canton in his autobiographical novel *Montauk.* But the Switzerland we see through Herr Geiser's somewhat distorted perception is not the tourist Switzerland. It is nearer to the Switzerland of Hemingway's "An Alpine Idyll," in which the peasant who can leave his remote farm in winter only on skis is forced to store his dead wife in the woodshed until spring.

In this setting the main—virtually only—character, Geiser, pensioned, a widower and going on seventy-four, is caught alone in seemingly interminable cold August rain. Faced with the minor calamity of the weather and the greater and universal calamities of old age, loss of powers and the approach of death, Geiser is hanging on. One question the novel deals with is the one asked by Frost's oven bird—what to make of a diminished thing. Geiser's mind is declining and he knows it, but he fights back. "No knowledge without memory," he reflects, and he cultivates his memory, making lists of things he recalls. What he can't recall, and the vast number of things he is curious about but has never learned, worry him, so he looks up answers in his twelve-volume encyclopedia.

It is logical enough for him to look up the record of natural disasters in his history of Ticino. There have been many. Farm families, with their buildings and their animals, have been buried by avalanches or landslides; floods have taken out bridges; all that remains of one village is the steeple of its church rising from rocks and bushes. In logical sequence Geiser moves from rock slides to geology and



thence to the appearance and evolution of life. Biblical accounts, including the stories of the creation and the flood, supplement the encyclopedia, although Geiser is not a believer. He speculates that if man invented God, the concept of God may vanish when men do.

The title of the novel in the original German is *Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän,* man appears, or emerges, in the Holocene. This suggests something a bit different from the English translation—man appearing into a world with a long history before his coming and possibly a long history after his going. It may also suggest a sturdy species stepping forth at the end of the ice age, able to face natural calamities, including age and death. Able also, despite limitations, to appreciate its time on earth. (EH) □

Perceptibles

Mohammed Reza Pahlavi: ***Answer to History;*** Stein & Day; New York.

The tumbling of the Shah of Iran from his Peacock Throne set off shock waves that are still spreading across the Middle East and, in fact, across the stage of world politics as well. A comprehensive and insightful account by Mohammed Reza Pahlavi of his stewardship and his eventual banishment would have been helpful to our understanding of that crisis. Unfortunately, however, he was writing in the midst of a terminal and painful illness, and his version of events leaves us with little that is new or noteworthy.

There can be no denying that his "White Revolution" strove to aid the Iranian people or that he was a relatively faithful U.S. ally. But he found the inconsistency and vacillation of the Carter administration during the diaspora of his exile frustrating. Washington's reluctance to grant him asylum — (while nations like Egypt, Morocco, the Bahamas and even leftist Mexico were willing to take him in), its nervous actions in the face of the hostage crisis and its acquiescence to Pahlavi's virtual captivity in Panama all served to betray the McGovernite origins of the Carter foreign policy.

In many ways the Iranian situation was a microcosm of the whole scope of U.S. diplomacy and of the West's double standard—one set of rules for our friends and another for our Marxist adversaries. The Shah is now consigned to the dustbin of history, but his life certainly leaves us with some lessons to ponder. (DP)

* * *

Evelyne Sullerot: ***Women on Love: Eight Centuries of Feminine Writing;*** Doubleday; New York.

This volume is beautifully illustrated with black-and-white reproductions of art ranging from classical to modern, but Ms. Sullerot's scholarship and her obviously prodigious research are marred by a blatant feminist bias. In a very lengthy introduction she admits that her study of the writings of Frenchwomen is almost entirely subjective: after rejecting anything she suspected of being the work of a man using a female pseudonym, she simply selected those pieces she liked the best, or the ones she (and she alone) considered important. We are given her basis for judgment: beauty, genuineness and—the lone attempt at objectivity—how representative the work was of the era in which it was written.

A reader must be forgiven for assuming that, for centuries,

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there was hardly a single happy marriage in all of France. Such is the impression given by Ms. Sullerot. We can feel her great enthusiasm for women who "burn with passion," and we endure her disdain for any restraint: ". . . rigorous self-discipline will torture and cripple women for centuries to come."

After all her hard work, it seems to us that Ms. Sullerot has missed the point: it is not so much that women should be incomplete without men, or men without women, but that each is incomplete without the other. (BK) □

WASTE OF MONEY

Phillips's Philter

Debora Phillips with Robert Judd: ***Sexual Confidence: Discovering the Joys of Intimacy;*** Houghton Mifflin Co.; Boston.

The dust-jacket picture of Dr. (of psychiatry) Phillips exudes exactly the title of her book—sexual confidence. Wearing a scoop-necked sweater with peek-a-boo crochet trim down the middle, she has her hands thrust provocatively into her pockets and an enormous smile, complete with dimple, on her face. The jacket blurb about the authors explains that she teaches human sexuality to medical students, gynecologists and psychiatrists. We are thus assured that she is definitely an Authority.

Dr. Phillips is not only an Authority, she also seems to be a very organized, methodical person, at least judging from her penchant for list-making. We are presented with lists of things to do, or to think about, in order to increase our sexual confidence and pleasure. In order to reduce any of a myriad of sexual anxieties, we are instructed to make "anxiety hierarchy lists." There are also step-by-step plans to get rid of fear, self-consciousness and jealousy, all of which are considered obstacles to sexual pleasure. In a single slim volume, Dr. Phillips sweeps away the mists and cobwebs of inhibition (religious, moral, parental) about anything, and she paves the way for everyone to enjoy sex with almost anyone in just about any manner imaginable. We are assured that homosexuality, masturbation and bondage fantasies, among other things, are not only quite all right, but perhaps even beneficial. She has also been thoughtful enough to provide the reader with a set of "exercises" at the end of some chapters.

All these theories and suggestions would worry us, except that they are contained in one of the silliest, most banal treatises possible. A few of Dr. Phillips's most original and profound observations: "In all the magic and music of sex, there's a certain sloppiness." "Beauty is different things to different people." "Sex can also lead to pregnancy." If Dr. Phillips is an Authority, then this is one area better left to the amateurs. (BK) □

LIBERAL CULTURE

Hype & Sensationalism

Upon the arrival of the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control in Tinsel Town, a hue and cry was raised by several actors and actresses, the likes of which hasn't been heard on the West Coast since the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. Their world seemed to be threatened. All Representative Leo Zeferetti's committee wanted to know was whether stardust and cocaine existed in equal abundance on and around Hollywood Boulevard.

The most interesting protest came from Ms. Cathy Lee Crosby—who refused to testify before the committee because of "media hype and sensationalism." Ms. Crosby hosts ABC's "That's Incredible." On that program Ms. Crosby, wearing the most form-flattering outfit she can stuff herself into, narrates film showing a man catching a shot arrow in his teeth or something equally ingenious, then utters with all the ingenuousness she can muster: "That's incredible." It's natural, then, that sniffing coke at parties seems to her something on the order of nibbling at a pancake. Other considerations, like the drug-induced mortality rate among juveniles who cull their ideas for living from Hollywood gossip, do not enter her Vidal Sassooned head. (GSV) □

Social Register

Unbridled passions are skyrocketing in the highest circles of British society, as the London press reports on that heart-rending scene from the private life of Charles, Prince of Wales, and his newly betrothed, the lovely Lady Diana Spencer:

> The 19-year-old Diana, who will marry the heir to the British throne July 29, cried after getting a farewell kiss from the prince at London's Heathrow Airport. He also appeared emotional as he said, 'Take care.'

The behavior of the heir to the British throne strikes one as somewhat unrestrained. To pronounce such a highly personal phrase in a public airport is a little shocking. After all, no one of good breeding would pronounce "Take care!" so casually and in the presence of so many commoners. Small wonder that, as the Associated Press reports:

> One airport official said, 'We have never seen such a touching farewell.' □

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The Profundity of Grossness and Pretentiousness as Art

Raging Bull; **Based on the book by Jake La Motta; Directed by Martin Scorsese; United Artists.**

Heaven's Gate; **Written and directed by Michael Cimino; United Artists.**

by Eric Shapearo

Raging Bull is a display of something very special—it could be called a movie style of Italian-American *verismo.* And as style, in this case, is also substance, the effect is staggering. The routine naturalism of up-to-date film-making transcends the portrayal of life at its worst, and goes a step further: it makes delicate (a strange-sounding adjective in this cinematic surfeit of savagery) suggestions about human fate and its enigmas (which were never anticipated in the scruffy railroad flats in the Bronx *anno* 1940), about the interaction of heroism with brutality—all in all, a territory where literary naturalists of our era rarely venture. How *Ordinary People,* a shallow movie about allegedly complex people, could win an Oscar over this profound inquiry into the heart of vulgarity, profanity and coarseness can only be explained by Hollywood's hypocrisy and corruption.

On his way into the depths of obtuseness, Mr. Scorsese discovers a multitude of moving humanness and ethnically conditioned torments so intrinsically blended into the American context that a minimonument to American Italianness emerges, one that should somehow be enshrined on a float and carried during the San Gennaro procession. On top of that, Scorsese states some truths about boxing which horrify but do not repel, about the drabness of New York that repels and allures at the same time. The movie is quite a triumph for Martin Scorsese and Robert DeNiro—perhaps the most exciting actor in

American dramatic arts today—who structures a stunning portrait of a modern urban Caliban, lost without Prospero in the jungle of the American success ethic.

Why have film-makers of Italian descent been able to appropriate nearly all the cinematic literacy in current movie-making? Perhaps the most relevant glory of *Raging Bull* is that it brings into sharp focus one of the most interesting occurrences in modern American culture. The movie oozes with Italo-American ethnicity but, instead of being parochialized by it, it is transformed into an all-American allegory and, even further, becomes a universal message. Somehow all that Italo-American violence becomes a metaphor for crude, warm, primitive and extremely convincing humanism. It becomes a kind of justifiable violence. In contrast to the cold, contrived, vicious, psychotic, utterly commercialized violence of current Hollywood "creativeness," the Italo-American violence seems to originate in some elemental, strident emotionalism or easily recognizable and valid human impulses—pride, vengeance, search for callous dignity, sexual passions. Could it be that refinement of these motivations and feelings by American movie dramaturgy may prove to be the only hope for American culture?

* * *

Art, to my mind, is an attempt to introduce lucidity into the maze of things human. In order to be of worth, or at least credible, it must deal with the complexity of being and with something even more elusive—namely, the authenticity of truth. The last sounds like tautology, but it isn't. Truth can be relative and abstract, real and banal, and endeavors other than art can deal with truth according to their needs. Only certain truths serve art: strawberries with cream certainly taste better than street mud, but to make a movie about this truth seems rather superfluous. Once Michael Cimino abandoned the pursuit of authenticity in truth, he was doomed to wake up in a morass of pretentiousness of both content and form.

Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* was, in my view, the best American movie of the last twenty years, precisely because of its magnificent attempt to capture the authenticity of truth of an historical moment, with all possible probing into the American man of that moment. The reverence for the complexity of such an undertaking was apparent in the glorious efforts in the script, directing, acting. Human feelings and bonds were institutionalized; the statement about American pluralism rang true; the comment on American innocence was convincing. Warm patriotism is the final value left to those who have been stripped of humanness by the maelstrom of history—a simple but authentic inference. An artist never makes unequivocal, black-and-white judgments when approaching history and society—Cimino seems to have known this principle in *The Deer Hunter.*

He is completely oblivious to it in

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Heaven's Gate. Once again he makes American pluralism his subject matter. He proclaims loudly that its history and its vicissitudes were written in blood, not ink—a veracity which is all too easily converted into a cliché. He seems not to know that only sin, crime and personal wickedness can be univocal, while all social dilemmas suffer from a chronic ambivalence. Cimino's depiction of the criminal murderousness of Wasps and the martyrdom of new immigrants in the cattle wars of Wyoming at the end of the last century are unenlightened by a single sigh of moral or cognitive incertitude. It is, however, equipped with the dialectics of almost Soviet-manufactured socialist realism: *one* single upper-class Wasp liberal is the only just man among the wicked, which proves that consciousness-raising is possible and remains in keeping with the Marxian gospel.

This philosophical sleaziness impinges on form. Gone is the spare cinematic impressionism of *The Deer Hunter,* the stark pursuit of the oppressive visualness filtered through the stylishness of the story. In *Heaven's Gate* mannerisms are on a rampage: the immigrant Slavic peasants look like Berkeley anti-war demonstrators; their women are indistinguishable from Greenwich Village feminists; and the Waspish establishmentarians, thugs, marshals and hired killers all wear the same Park Avenue Sulka shirts and Countess Mara ties (ties? In Johnson County, Wyoming, 1890?) during their most bloody encounters. Stylization becomes ludicrous and unbearable: in their free time, the German and Ukranian farm laborers either trek in columns through the Western wilderness, as orderly as if they were guarded by Cossacks or SS guards, or they roller-skate in their community hall with the impish gracefulness of Baryshnikov. And so on, and on, and on—in killing and dancing and love-making, couched in a dialogue that could have been written by Max Brand if he had ever had to make his living in the editorial offices of the *Village Voice.*

Two questions are never answered: Why does the central character, whom we follow from the first to the last scene and who is a Harvard Law graduate of Eastern establishmentarian stripe and Newport-style wealth, become a scruffy alcoholic marshal who lives in a log cabin in Wyoming? And why has Mr. Cimino made two movies at an early age, of which one is an exemplar and one an exercise in pompous, if not embarrassing, ineptitude? Both questions provide an inherently fascinating amplitude of possible answers—a literary proposition in itself.

* * *

***Excalibur;* Written by John Boorman and Rospo Pallenberg; Directed by John Boorman; Warner Brothers.**

by Stephen Macaulay

During the early 60's, when I was a preteen, my brother and I spent almost every Saturday afternoon at the movies. Four types of films were shown: horror movies (sucked blood or chopped-off heads); war films (a sweaty jungle in the Pacific); Westerns (boot leather and flying lead); and science-fiction films (a monster or flying saucers wrecking the capitals of the world). My brother often threw a jacket over my head when things were too gruesome; slightly older, he could take it. Later, the theater I went to switched to porno.

Excalibur should be a film for the young, and it should not be necessary to throw jackets over their heads. Yet it's dressed up with Jungian psychology, Wagner's "Siegfried's Rhine Journey" and other pomposities. Take out the nude scenes, spill fewer gallons of blood, thereby eliminating the "R" rating, and the movie still remains a film for adults. However, not a particularly good one.

The problem is that John Boorman's film takes itself too seriously. But whatever the reason, the movie does not work as well as it could. Mallory, for all practical purposes, is the touchstone for Arthurian romance (only purists will point to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* or the *Mabinogion* as the proper points of departure). Boorman should have been more faithful to Mallory, who spun a good yarn.

Le Morte d'Arthur is very anachronistic in terms of its characters and setting, but who really notices? In one of the "serious" segments of *Excalibur,* Boorman emphasizes time: at the wedding of Arthur and Guinevere, a Christian ceremony, Merlin laments the passing of the pagan and the power of magic; he tells neophyte Morgan le Fay that their time is gone. The audience is supposed to discreetly wipe its tears. Arthur is shipped off to Avalon with less emotional emphasis. The Matter of Britain is fourth fiddle to the Matters of Magic, Violence and Sex. Which makes the movie often visually astounding, but its priorities are all wrong. □

Mr. Macaulay is a youthful movie fan in Detroit.

MUSIC

Records

Bechet

***Sidney Bechet;* The Giants of Jazz Series; Time-Life Records; Alexandria, Virginia.**

Time-Life Records (produced by Time-Life Books, Inc.) has issued in its series, "Giants of Jazz," a choice selection of Sidney Bechet's recordings in a single three-disc album. It's a glory.

As a cultural phenomenon, jazz, the only authentic musical revolution of modern times, is intrinsically connected to the stormy technological upheavals of our epoch. Its artistic legacy and its documentation is the phonographic record—a relatively young invention. There is no other way to perpetuate the improvisational substance of jazz

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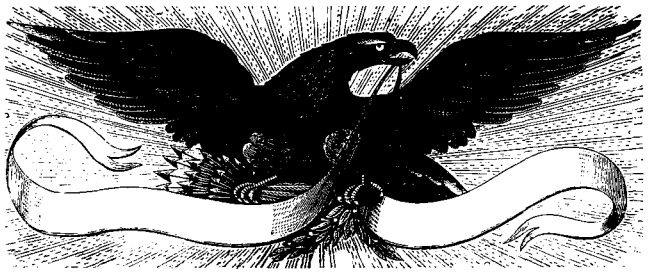
NEXT
in *The Rockford Papers*

Surveying the American political landscape after the 1980 elections, one finds a decimated Democratic Party, internally dominated by its liberal wing, yet incapable of recapturing national majorities with that agenda. On the Republican side one finds a party dominated by conservatives, yet uncertain of its heritage and unwilling to articulate a unifying theme that would explain the purpose behind its pursuit of political office. Even as President Reagan attempts to articulate a new guiding theme, his efforts are denigrated by praising his media skills rather than his political vision. While he speaks of a broad reconsideration of the purpose of American politics, his key advisors seek to jettison the social issues of the 1980 Republican platform. Nonetheless, the party manages to win Presidential majorities, and is likely to continue to do so as long as the Democrats remain in disarray.

Between the two major parties one finds a substantial number of Americans who are genuinely perplexed. They recognize the collapse of the Democratic Party's political purpose: its policies have been tried with uniformly counterproductive results. President Carter tried hard to defend this record, but the evidence of failure surrounded the people who went to the polls in November 1980. As federal involvement has failed in our schools, our cities and our families, federal noninvolvement has failed as a foreign policy. When Reagan challenged the American people to ask themselves if they were better off than they were four years ago, few could endorse the stewardship of the Democrats under Jimmy Carter. The tone of the campaign, however, attested to the weight of the dead liberal dream. Americans still defined their degree of well-being in terms of New Deal-Great Society notions of progress, and very few appear ready to ask: "Progress toward what?"

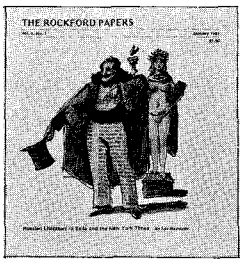


In the face of this manifest failure, the Republican realignment can only start by capitalizing on the dissatisfaction with the opposition. Organizing that dissatisfaction into a new dominant coalition will require overcoming several obstacles to a new majority.

The most formidable obstacle to a new realignment is the privatization of the political universe that has coincided with our decline into ethical relativism. Within our legal system, principles of *natural* law have been replaced by the processes of *positive* law. The moral inversion of this substitution results in a questioning of all authority; power becomes merely a fleeting phenomenon subject to the fluctuation of daily events. People deny any standard of right conduct, and even majority influence fails. Citizens are united only in their denial of any common moral standard, adopting a "Do your own thing" stance as a means to avoid the questions of what happens to a society that appears open to every aberration.

One doubts that a great nation can long endure in a condition of political drift, that is, without a notion of public purpose that involves a vision of the public good. A Reagan realignment will have to give some new direction to the common understanding of "progress."

—Edward J. Lynch
"Political Realignment of a Privatized Populace?"
The Rockford Papers,
July 1981



First-place award winner in the Northern Illinois Advertising Council's 1981 "Raddie Awards," "Public Service/Public Relations" category.

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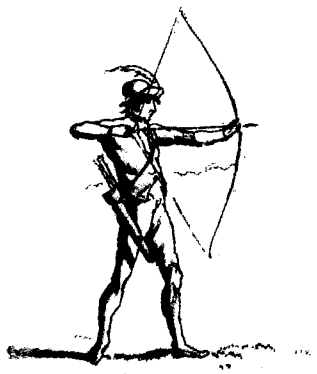
other than through machines. A jazz library is thus a stack of discs or tapes; the fact that both Edison and King Oliver belonged to the same generation proves that Giambattista Vico was right about the metaphysics of history. "Jazz teems with legendary geniuses who . . . played better than any of the giants," remarks Frank Kappler in his introduction to *Bechet,* and he adds: "If only they had recorded!" He thereby has defined the existential matter of the *new* music which could never be conveyed to posterity by the creative artist himself, only by technology.

Sidney Bechet, a Creole clarinetist from New Orleans, the Bethlehem of jazz, played with almost every giant of his era and was abundantly recorded, but the image of the supreme greatness of Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton or Bessie Smith eluded him. He was not the only one who was unjustly ignored, though, and he was much better off than, for instance, his close friend and associate, Tommy Ladnier, who certainly was a trumpet player *au pair* with Armstrong in terms of creative originality and artistic intensity. But, because of his many illnesses, misfortunes, drug addiction and early death, he is known only to jazz cognoscenti. Ladnier is abundantly featured in this album, which somehow enhances its stature. All in all, Bechet's life and achievements receive fair treatment, and no one who has listened to all six sides could doubt for a moment that Time-Life Records, thanks to modern technology (the hi-fi quality of the album is flawless), has constructed a lasting monument to one of jazz's greatest, most idiosyncratic and independent geniuses. The momentousness of jazz is there; the music which has become the outburst of authentic popular substances fused into primary and weighty human concerns is there. Perhaps the ultimate instrumental blues statement this side of Armstrong's "West End Blues" is there. It is entitled "Really the Blues," and it was recorded at an extraordinary session sponsored by Hugues Panassié, the famed French jazz theoretician, in 1938 in New York City. Never has the essence of Afro-American poignancy been more alive and audible than in the sound and lament that Bechet put together with Ladnier, Mezz Mezzrow (a white Chicagoan) on the clarinet and Teddy Bunn on guitar. Sidney Bechet had a full, beautiful life: he loved to create music and to express in it his pride in being a black man from New Orleans; he craved people, friends, pleasures and adventure and he had them all in abundance. He pursued fame and recognition, and, in the end, both came to him in more profusion than he ever expected.



* * *

Holiday

***Billie Holiday;* The Giants of Jazz Series; Time-Life Records; Alexandria, Virginia.**

The essence of Billie Holiday's art and artistry was her meticulous consistency of style and perhaps the most non-melodramatic poignancy of delivery ever registered in the annals of recorded jazz. That consistency and poignancy did not always work in her favor, however. Some tried to dismiss her during her miserable, even tragic, life; they fussed about her inflections, affectations and the musical gimmickry that could easily be associated with the Café Society flavor of the big Eastern cities and the five-o'clock-lounge smartness of the late 1930's. In fact, these so-called deficiencies were marks of tonal refinement rarely found in jazz singing. This marvelous album sets everything straight: it is not only a technically flawless testimonial to Billie's grandeur as perhaps the most idiosyncratic diva of jazz, but also a lasting documentation of what can be termed an elusively sophisticated New York recording-session style of small swing combos just before World War II.

Mr. Melvin Maddocks, a frequent contributor to *Time* magazine's book section who usually seems to us vacuously eclectic in his critical evaluations and uneven in his literary introspections, has done an endearing job as Billie's biographer and as an interpreter of her music in the brochure enclosed with the album. It's obviously a work of love.

* * *

Updating the Blues

***Blues Deluxe;* Muddy Waters, Koko Taylor, Willie Dixon et al.; recorded at Navy Pier, Chicago, August 1980.**

Such an update is a sad and unconvincing undertaking, especially as heard on this album, recorded at the 1980 Chicagofest. For some reason, which perhaps could be traced in a more in-depth survey, the blues—a musical and poetic phenomenon often called America's greatest contribution to our epoch's culture—has fallen victim to the cultural sleaziness of our time. The greatness of the blues, which grew out of the Delta and expanded along the Mississippi River in every possible direction to every corner of the American reality, was in blending the heritage and experience of the American black with one of the most versatile formal innovations in the history of music. That unique combination soon gave this art form a universality which transcended the Afro-American label, and in the last 80-odd years sadness, melancholy and sorrow have become most understandable

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to mankind by way of a blues tonality. Unfortunately this album proves that the current representatives of the Chicago blues genre have lost that sublime quality. The musicians seem to exert themselves to express show-biz demands rather than basic human concerns and afflictions. Their instrumental paucity —woefully influenced by rock, a bastardized form of jazz music in itself— substitutes primitive harmonic improvisation for the mastery of the melodic improvisation used by the great instrumentalists of the 20's, which, at that time, elicited a sort of genuflection from the white symphonic establishment, in recognition of the riches of black musicality. The grassroots simplicity of Ma Rainey's or Bessie Smith's message gave way to lowbrow, vulgar, phony folksiness, which was also appropriated from the white rock singers of the 60's, with their fake "populism." To credit Chicago with this style of blues does a disservice to the blues legacy of that city: after all, it was in Chicago that King Oliver played the "Wabash Blues," Armstrong cut some immortal sides with his Hot Five, and Mama Yancey sang "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor." □

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

God and the Constitution

by Bertram Lippman

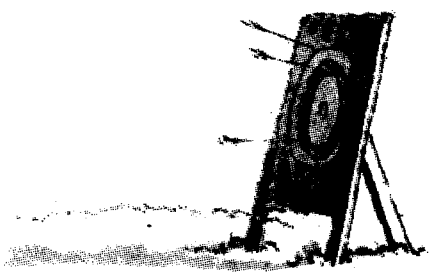
An editorial in the *Chronicles of Culture* (Vol. 4, No. 4, July 1980) says that "the Pilgrims came to this country because they did not want their children to learn untruths about God." That's true, I thought as I read it; true for the Pilgrims—but not for me. The Pilgrims believed they knew the truth about God. Unfortunately, many of us today (always conscious of our debt to those British ancestors, and grateful that it was they and not the Spaniards who made the first permanent settlements in North America) do not know what *the* truth about God is. Therefore, in this era of Carter and Reagan and the Moral Majority, it occurred to me to concern myself a bit, now that we conservatives seem to have gained some political power, that matters of God and religion should not splinter us.

My purpose here is not to attack religion. People in the Christian West have given up the practice of attacking religion with nonreligion. But it would be particularly unfortunate if the identification of God with morality should come between me and the *Chronicles of Culture,* to which I was first attracted by the editor's unmitigated contempt for communism and for those in free countries who don't share his—and my —total enmity to it. This unequivocal condemnation, akin to Christ's for blind guides and whited sepulchres and expressed in brilliantly ironic language with a concomitant appreciation of our democracy, should be enough to insure our continued fraternity. I value the *Chronicles of Culture* only slightly less than Solzhenitsyn. He too calls up, calls back, calls upon religion, the orthodox form of Christianity. I believe I understand why he does so, and I think I understand the invoking of religion in the *Chronicles.* My understanding is not compassion or tolerance or condescension. The fact is simply that I can enlist in Solzhenitsyn's—alas!—shrinking army, and I can subscribe to the *Chronicles, without* recourse to religion. Solzhenitsyn is a noble and towering human being, but we do not look to him for the meaning of democracy. The meaning of American democracy is in the Constitution, which allows those who wish to follow God to do so, but such Americans are not therefore "more equal" before the law than the nongodly. The Constitution does not ask anyone to reject or abandon religion; it simply says, in effect, that we do not need it. Religion was presumably relegated to a place outside the Constitution because it is so elusive, so much the creature (and the victim) of hermeneutics, of exegesis, of verbal manipulation, of the thaumaturgy of the Logos.

Where shall we learn the truth about God? In a recent issue of *Chronicles of Culture,* Professor James Thompson finds that one Jeremy Rifkin "exposes the shallowness of his grounding in 20th-century Christian thought."* *Which* Christian thought? Is it Barth's ("Real socialism is real Christianity") or Heidegger's (assuming one can be sure what he really is saying) or Küng's (who seems to be apologizing for being unable in conscience to apologize)? Or could it be Chesterton or Maurras whose thought we should follow? Perhaps it is Unamuno, an "existential" Christian of renown, who said that "faith in God consists in creating God." He was a great lover of God, but he believed that civilization began with slavery—the enslavement of one man by another—and that "there is much more humanity in war than in peace." Are these the views by which Rifkin should be guided?

Mr. Lippman teaches English at Queens College in New York.

*Elsewhere, George L. Murphy, a scientist who is a candidate for the priesthood, has declared that "theological defects [!] were built into Newtonian physics from the start."



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That Western civilization grew and flourished under Christianity is not debatable. There is the West, and there are nations trying to westernize. Until Lenin, no Western nation, whatever its moral stance or its achievements (or lack of same), disavowed its Christianity. I include even Hitlerite Germany, and I qualify the observation in the unique case of the United States, even though de Tocqueville found America to be the most religious of Christian countries. Western civilization, in which all things that we value have been achieved, is, except for the five or six centuries of the classical era, Christian.

But—I blush to say it—*post hoc* or *per hoc* is not *propter hoc.* Western history as seen through the eyes of a schoolboy also includes the Dark Ages, when nothing very memorable happened under Christianity for six or seven hundred years except Christianity. We had the Inquisition, the Thirty Years' War, the extermination of the Albigenses, the Irish troubles, and a long list of heretics (or losers), from Arians and Akistitae to Socinians and Nonconformists. How the West became the place of change, of advancement, of the idea of progress, is a complicated and obscure matter not easily explained. Most people now say that they "believe in God," and definitions are left to theologians and philosophers. I think it is fair to say that what most people actually put their faith and trust in now is not doctrine or ritual so much as it is history, that is, the record of two thousand years of men, *men like us,* who lived, bred and died as Christians. We cannot escape history, and we honor the search for God which defined the lives of all those millions.

Even now believers point, in ways simple or profound, plain or circumvolute, to the cosmos, to existence, as proof of God. A link in the chain connecting man to the Creator is still missing, however. If we agree that the unfolding order of nature proves the existence of God, we still may ask: How do we know that the unknown God who made the universe, this universe that science is committed to expressing in laws or formulas as secular knowledge, also wants us not to be envious, to be forgiving, to refrain from taking life, our own or another's? And how do we know that He considers birth control contrary to His natural law, that we are constrained to—or must not—circumcise our boys, that abortion is sinful, or that desire is lustful? And that we may not get to Heaven by our own good works (unless we are original Jews, or Calvinists)? We know these things, if differently at different times, through revelation. God speaks to us through certain persons through His spirit, which gave us reason, free will, the power to love and human frailties.

We are free to believe that, or we can choose to believe that Jacques Monod was right when he taught that we are the creatures of Chance and Necessity. It is we who decide which prophet to listen to — Moses, Augustine, Mohammed, Kant or Emanuel Swedenborg. Such nongodly people, of whom I am one, do not accept any statement or rule or explanation simply because it is proffered as God's will or intention or expectation. Exhortations to listen to the word of God are all too likely to reach the ear in the voice of Dr. Bailey Smith or one of his semblables.

But there is no need for conservatives to be sundered by the rock of that difference. Rather we can come together in our admiration of America, a work of *men.* Christian men, to be sure, but Christians wary of each other's Christianity and united in their determination to keep religion out of the Constitution. God is nowhere mentioned, in the Preamble or in the document itself (the language of which is starkly plain and specific, in contrast to the stirring tendentiousness of the Declaration). And there is that First Amendment, its broad and extreme wording which we have traditionally interpreted as the separation of Church and State. Even the oath of office permits "affirmation" as against "swearing." Our Presidents have inscribed themselves under ten different sects, and three (including Lincoln) were nonmembers. We can unite, we conservatives, in the Constitution, and not in the Godhead. It is the Constitution that establishes man and man's reason (those who will may call it God-given reason) as the basis for a free, responsible life and the realization of self. But is not the Constitution the heritage of centuries of Christian life, struck off by men who read the Bible? Indeed it is. The Constitution, however, is not sacred. It has built into it the mechanism for amendments, for governing in the light of opinions. It *trusts men* to live decently by their own laws. But it does not ask men to imitate saints or angels. It gives rational pre-eminence to *men,* and confides in *man* the competence to establish his own ethical life. For these reasons I honor the Constitution and the country that possesses and is possessed by it. I believe that what is in the Constitution is moral and ethical. And pragmatically so. (And for the same reason I am loath to try to change it, especially in the areas of fashion and sexual morality.)

Our American democracy seems to me the freest and purest of all, the one most capable of persisting as both ideal and actuality—a great human invention. And this country has no state religion, nor ever had, and was endowed by its founders with a decent respect for the troubles that can come to a country from contending faiths and a temporal priesthood. While we are, then, quite properly remembering that the West is Christian, we must also remember that the United States is commodious, and hospitable to change, perhaps even to the change to a kind of developing secular religion of rational, anthropomorphic humanism—the religion, in short, of constitutional democracy, a religion in which we can err without sinning, and strive in the name of man. □

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THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

An Active Disease

Is insanity amoral? Is there no correlation between a demented human act and its moral significance? Those considerations were somehow absent from the avalanche of commentary and interpretation of what happened on March 30 in front of the Washington, D.C. Hilton, when Ronald Reagan's "new blue suit was ruined" (in his own words) by a bullet from the gun of an assassin whose inspiration to shoot at the President of the United States came from a movie and from his "love" for a teenage actress. The most routine reaction was an immediate outcry to abolish handguns from the American reality—a solution as simple and practical as turning the moon into a kindergarten. Very few spoke of the deadly, vicious, sick sociocultural climate which produces sinister madmen who plan to be declared "mentally incompetent," and at the same time assure themselves of "a place in the history books," as Reagan's would-be assassin admitted in one of his letters. It may be impossible to avoid producing movies which can be reprocessed—by a warped mind—into an impulse to kill, but it does seem to us that it is quite possible to draw a line between the psychiatrists' and civil libertarians' scornful dismissal of any moral factor and the grim warnings that loom after this most recent attempt on a President's life. During the 19th century there were three such attempts; two of them were successful. In our century there have been seven of them, and two were successful. Are only gun manufacturers and maniacs to be blamed?

We think that there are other, additional, culprits. The most guilty would seem to be the all-encompassing cultural climate in which acts of violence, like shooting a President, appear to flourish; they become journalistically structured legends by way of the modern liberal media's unfettered sensationalism. Thus the contemporary liberal press seems to us more culpable than gun manufacturers; they herald any criminal event, failing to rebuke it with a moral intensity that matches their frenzy to inform. Moreover, the unholy romance between the mainstream liberal press and its vicious, left-radical outlets creates an atmosphere of murderousness permeated by potential, even unavoidable, violence. No one rebuked Andrew Young when he lied, in print, about the "open season on black people" under the Reagan administration; on the contrary, the *New York Times* opened its pages to anything Mr. Young wanted to say. It is one thing to disagree with a conservative President on his goals in politics and the economy, and quite another to create a fog of lies and demagogically inflated accusations that make his policies sound almost evil. *Village Voice,* a weekly magazine owned by an Australian tycoon and staffed with Scottish bolsheviks, ran an ad, "Impeach Reagan!" *before* the President's inauguration. A couple of months later, we read there:

> Reagan's cant often sounds like 1840 Know-Nothingism, a Nativist movement preaching 'America for the Americans,' that is, 'No ethnics, please.' Assimilate or vanish. My most paranoid nightmare: all Americans will someday carry identity cards declaring ethnic heritage, so that when the American Reich begins....

These are no longer political divergences of views and polemics, but cynical, vicious innuendos born of a radical perversity within the liberal consciousness which squirts its Brie-cum-political-rage saliva into still-feebler minds and may end up putting guns into the hands of "countercultural" drifters.

But the press alone can't be held entirely responsible; it had some more-refined accomplices in generating a climate in which nothing is condemned and nobody has to be responsible for who he is or what he does. The press found support from two civilizational tumors, both of which have rendered the law virtually powerless: the judiciary that breeds contempt for the law, and the chronically degenerated humanitarianism of psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry as the most potent legislators of modern morality. In an unheard-of cooperation, the guardians of the law and the self-appointed guardians of the human soul have succeeded in robbing the American society of both its religious sense of sin and its secular sense of civic responsibility. They want us to accept insanity as a factor divorced from any morality based on natural law, and there's a deadly mistake in this view. Insanity that causes wrong *is* a moral factor and, therefore, cannot escape a punitive reaction from society, regardless of whether the insane perpetrator realizes why he is being punished or confined. People *must* have the right to destroy evil, conscious or unconscious.

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Perhaps the most horrendous aspect of Reagan's shooting was the relative equanimity with which it was accepted by the public at large. The consensus, here and all over the world, is that we have become resigned to the acceptance of violence which, together with the monstrous ubiquitousness of handguns, has made life a nightmare and, at the same time, has established that nightmare as normal. A fatal error is thereby imposed upon us all, an error that derives from distorted Freudian notions and insidiously maintains that we are all mentally disordered to some degree, thus some sort of derangement is the norm rather than the exception—and therefore its manifestations escape moral judgment. But an act of crime, iniquity or wickedness *is* a moral occurrence. As long as we are restrained from decisive methods of dealing with those who indulge in such crimes, the future of the American civilization is in question. In spite of the outcries from psychologists, it seems to us that the summary hanging of a lunatic assassin might contribute more to the healing of mental diseases than countless conventions at which adulatory speakers elaborate on the tender care of various psychoses as the most precious legacy of the Western ethos.

It's ironic that it was a son of an upper-class family who attempted to murder President Reagan, who was elected mostly by workers and farmers. To us, it seems like this kind of insanity could be cured, if only we could abolish the notion of psychology as the ultimate wisdom for conditioning human destiny, and eject the judges whose pompous fancies of social conscience make a farce of the law.

Kid Lib

We were recently treated to a treatise on children's rights by one Mr. Paul Weingarten, courtesy of the *Chicago Tribune.* In it we could learn some interesting things. For instance: in some states a 13-year-old is considered an adult when it comes to obtaining birth-control devices or an abortion. In the state of Washington, a child can demand a different residence from his or her parents, and the parents are then legally

forced to pay child support to whomever their child lives with. In several states, children of various ages can divorce their parents and thus be declared "emancipated." Mr. Weingarten seems to think all this is just fine; his only concern is that "each court has a different opinion on when a child does and doesn't have the same rights accorded adult citizens."

Schools, once thought to be the sites of formal learning, are treated with particular contempt. The much-publicized horrors of drug-dealing and student violence, both between students and toward teachers and administrators, simply do not exist for Mr. Weingarten. He deplores the many rules that schools impose on students: "One of those codes declares '(everything but teaching) is secondary . . . and care must be taken that even activities which are not . . . improper do not so expand that their distractions impede (education.)' In English, that means if the principal finds something—*anything*—'distracting,' whatever that means, he can stop it." (The elipses and emphasis belong to Mr. Weingarten.) To add further credibility to his position, he quotes an attorney: ". . . they [the school administrators] always get things backward. They think responsibilities come first, and then rights." Don't they? We always thought that learning one's responsibilities enabled one to use his rights in a proper manner.

Finally, in the last segment of his five-part series, Mr. Weingarten gets around to noticing parents. He reluctantly describes several areas in which the state has invaded parental authority. Again, the only thing that bothers him about this trend is that there is no uniformity to the judicial decisions. This portion is entitled "Children's gain not necessarily the parents' loss," but we could not find a single sentence that would support such a claim. The end result of kid lib will very likely be *everybody's* loss, especially the kids'. (BK)

"I love being an animal . . ."

If we now have an America where a subhuman is hailed as a sociomoral exemplar, we probably owe it to our free, unfettered-by-any-valid-criterion media. It's a bold assessment, perhaps a sweeping generalization, but the longer we look at what's going on, the more we feel that the responsibility for our disintegration must be laid at the feet of the insane journalism of the so-called "critics," "reviewers" and "interviewers" who poison American newspapers, and through them the popular mind, with rampant imbecility and moral torpor. Here is how it works.

In its Sunday "Arts & Books" section, the *Chicago Tribune,* a newspaper which is respectable only in its own eyes, runs a piece furnished by the Knight-Ridder Newspaper Syndicate. The feature is on one Wendy Williams, a punk-rock singer who, in the lingo of modern journalism, could be termed a behavioral nihilist. A couple of decades ago she would have been called a sexual

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by George Reisman

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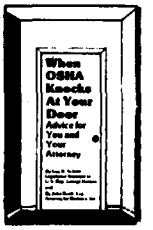

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pro, a century ago, a woman of ill repute, and, even further back in time, she would have been a strumpet, a slut. This gradation attests not only to the breakdown of mores, but to the breakdown of semantics as well, indicating how precise language has evaporated from our communication process. Ms. Williams is not a giddy youngster—she's 29, thus a cynical caterer rather than a zealous true believer. Recently she was arrested in Cleveland for simulating (who but Ms. Williams could know the difference between her simulation and the real thing?) masturbation on stage during a rock concert packed with a teen-age audience. This is, perhaps, the strangest thing that has happened to her trade over the centuries: some time ago, she would have performed to audiences of jaded socialites and drooling rakes; today, thanks to the Liberal Culture, its academe and its free press, she "liberates" adolescent "instincts." She was charged with obscenity, but, as things stand now, she has been duly acquitted by a progressive Ohio jury.

What does Ms. Williams do so well which permits her to avoid the denomination of a prostitute? That's easy—she communicates with an "interviewer" or "critic" of the Knight-Ridder chain who sells her message to the *Chicago Tribune.* It goes like this: Ms. Williams does not sell her services for pornographic gratification; she is an artist and works in the vineyard of culture, which the Knight-Ridder-cum-*Chicago Tribune* author properly emphasizes:

> These shows [Williams says about the beginning of her career] were staged by college girls and their boyfriends and 'highly scripted' and 'quite professional.' They featured both simulated and real sex on stage. Williams herself? Well, she says, 'I always played the heavy. You know, the female dominatrix; there was some petty bondage, that sort of thing.'

The free and responsible American journalist—whose name in this case is Ann Kolson—is quite impressed with such artistry. So she notes Ms. Williams's artistic credo:

> I love being crazy. I love being an animal—spitting on stage, crawling around.

And she eagerly gives an ideological perspective on Ms. Williams's mission in life:

> Williams doesn't really see herself as violent when she smashes objects on stage; artistic expression, she calls it. It is materialism that offends her—'I see people worshiping TVs, cars, and I smash them.'

Then she makes a compromising contradiction:

> She (Ms. Williams) has everything she wants, she says, including a white Cadillac.

But finally Ms. Kolson delivers her ultimate judgment, in the best tradition of our era's investigative journalism, which brought us the end of the Vietnam War and Watergate:

> Sexy, outrageous, outspoken, anarchistic, bright, vulgar, and really rather charming.

This is a glorifying sentence. This exemplifies American journalism's acceptance and apotheosis of the existence, mission and social worth of countless smelly Williamses, their presence amidst us and their intercourse with the sense of life of incoming generations. This propensity for glorification is what made the Pulitzer jury dispense one of its journalistic prizes for a lie. But *this* is not what Thomas Jefferson had in mind when he wrote: "Where the press is free and every man able to read, all is safe . . ." □

JOURNALISM

Pulitzergate

The most offensive part of the story is not what happened at the *Washington Post.* That the liberal press is corrupted, mendacious and utterly unreliable in its picturing of our reality is something we have often repeated in these pages. That it is ridiculously vulnerable to the most caricatural trendiness in its mass-cultural endeavors—for which it demands the most sublime freedoms ever devised by the Western mind and evolved within the Western ethos—is not news to us. But the supreme sordidness of the Pulitzer Prize jury—this is a plum. Here we have an institution which claims to embody the conscience of American journalism and to dispense rewards whose sociospiritual value is supposed to qualify American journalism as the ripe, glorious fruit of all our civilizational virtues. And what does it reward? Cheap, sleazy, biased, ideologically infected naturalism which promotes a squalid conceptualization of "causes," the irremediable dolor of a black child who does not exist, a grim fantasy of journalistic hustlers, the affirmative action of a demi-intellectual swindle, and crude, vulgar partisanship. Has it ever occurred to the Pulitzer Prize jury to consider a conservative journalist worthy of distinction? A nonliberal journal? A story by a new genius, a latter-day Mark Twain, Mencken or Lippman who, for a change, might have written an irrefutable apology of a compassionate car dealer, a chaste clergyman, a humorous Moral Majority activist? As we formulate such a proposition we can see its jarring discrepancy with the Pulitzer Prize augurs' morality. In punishing Ms. Cooke for her conmanship in romanticizing ghetto drug problems, the Pulitzer people awarded their honor instead to a radical "Catholic" from the *Village Voice* for her embellishment of psychotic murder cases. She wrote, in one of her pieces, that disagreement

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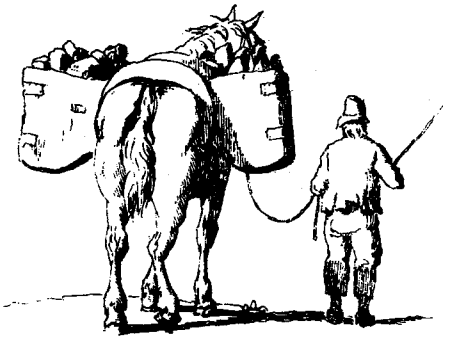
with liberal senators and congressmen amounts to "political execution." □

Adieu

In the deluge of grief and reverence that accompanied Mr. Walter Cronkite's exit from the electronic news scene, one aspect was discreetly left unmentioned in public. Namely, that the avuncular Mr. Cronkite, the nicest man in this country, was also deeply hated by a sizable segment of the U.S. population (it may even have been a majority)—a shameful truth which was totally ignored by the omniscient media he has come to symbolize. Of course, *we* never hated Mr. Cronkite (it would not be *our* style to hate someone of his caliber), but we never trusted the most trusted man in America. To us, he always seemed too good to be true and, in fact, we might have been right on two counts.

First, we believe in one of mankind's well-tried superstitions, amply confirmed by almost every religious teaching, that evil very often adopts an image of goodness. Although we would never honor Mr. Cronkite so much as to place him in the category of evil (a rather elevated and momentous qualification), we are not sure he was the positive element within the American universe that his employers and sycophants claimed him to be. During most of his career—and surely since the mid-60's—Mr. Cronkite daily lied to his audience: that is our second count. Oh no, he did not read false information or imaginary news; his copy was mostly factual, solidly rooted in the routine flow of news stories. His brazen mendacity, however, was his claim of strict political and ideological objectivity. In fact, his editing of the reports and his delivery (voice modulation, facial expression, an ironic smile here, a hypocritical gravity of tone there) carried a heavy proliberal bias. An accumulation of such prevaricative practices finally amounts to misinformation and disinformation. Mr. Cronkite indulged in those sins to his heart's content, all the while asserting that he did nothing but impart the naked, objective truth "the way it is" with no ideological bent, tilt or personal tinge. It would be more honest to put oneself on an ideological side, or in a political camp, but America's most lovable uncle avoided any such declaration with fanatical sanctimoniousness. In that manner, he lied about the student rebellion, the anti-war movement, the war in Vietnam; therefore he was despised and loathed by more Americans than he, his acolytes or his flatterers would ever suspect. Thus our epitaph reads: "We bid farewell to him with regret—here was a man who had a unique chance in history, to be honest and to be perceived as honest, but he succeeded only in the latter. What a pity! What a joy in heaven and on earth it would be to have a man who could be trusted to speak the truth."

Mr. Cronkite's listless liberalism has been replaced by his successor's tone (which we tend to call punk liberalism): that is, an attitude which indulges in brash demagoguery and successfully applies a sort of smart-alecky yellow



journalism to the promotion of liberal causes. Mr. Rather earned his stripes in punk liberalism when, in some of his interviews on "60 Minutes," he accused some of the lower class—hard-working and rather impecunious members of the Moral Majority—of being insensitive to the poor and needy. When reporting on President Reagan's attempted assassination, he spread the ugliest possible innuendoes to a TV audience of millions about Secretary of State Haig's pronouncement. We think that Mr. Haig's statement was unfortunate and ill-advised, but to imply that his declaration could carry a threat of a dictatorial coup d'état, which Mr. Rather ruthlessly and callously did, presents us with the problem of an indiscriminate, brutal, punk-liberal attitude in the seat of the CBS supreme propaganda center. We see the future along rather gloomy lines. □

Rather vs. Gilder

A puzzling altercation took place on a recent "60 Minutes" when Mr. Dan Rather, on loan from CBS News, fiercely attacked Mr. George Gilder, the author of *Wealth and Poverty* and noted defender of capitalism.

Mr. Rather assaulted Mr. Gilder from a strictly Marxist-Leninist position: he seemed to be startled by Mr. Gilder's intellectual love for free enterprise, and he invoked Marx as a visionary whose teachings must be accepted as gospel. It soon became evident that Mr. Rather's erudition has never quite grasped the clear distinction between what Messrs. Marx and Lenin understood as capitalism (a source of immoral economic activities) and what Mr. Gilder understands by this term (a spiritual stimulus for economic activities). That divergence eluded Mr. Rather, and he confused capitalism with the notion of big business, or the corporate syndrome, which was quite apart from Mr. Gilder's reasoning. We wound up with an amusing irony—Mr. Rather, the pet and beneficiary of CBS, one of the mightiest and greediest corporations on earth, chewing out Mr. Gilder, the apologist of entrepreneurial grocers, in the name of social justice. All in all, Mr. Rather came across as a disoriented mercenary who is rewarded for displaying his ignorance on television with millions of dollars. □

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